

THE
WORKS
OF

C. CHURCHILL.

VOL. IV.

W O R K S

C O N T E N T S

L O R D S P R A Y E R

T H E F I F T H E D I T I O N

Printed by JAMES KITCHING, (Printer to the
Church of England) and W. L. G. (Printer to the
Bishop of London)

T H E
W O R K S
O F
C. C H U R C H I L L.

I N F O U R V O L U M E S.

V O L. I V.

C O N T A I N I N G
S E R M O N S
O N T H E
L O R D ' s P R A Y E R.

T H E F I F T H E D I T I O N.

L O N D O N:
Printed for JOHN CHURCHILL (Executor to the late
C. CHURCHILL); and W. FLEXNEY, HOLBORN.
M D C C L X X I V.

DEDICATION

HEART to great Givers—
Who hold thy health as of his own
Accept thy offering—no need of fear
Call up one shadowy shape—no need of fear
To wound with battle—no need of fear
And bid me with the fragrance of my heart
Fresh life breathe on Giver's throne
And give of heart that cannot be mine
To speak to better truth—no need of fear
But which we love, is precious to thee



T H E

DEDICATION.

H E A L T H to great G L O S T E R—from a man
unknown,

Who holds thy health as dearly as his own,
Accept this greeting—nor let modest fear
Call up one maiden blush—I mean not here
To wound with flatt'ry—'tis a villain's art,
And suits not with the frankness of my heart.
Truth best becomes an *Orthodox* Divine,
And, spite of hell, that character is mine;
To speak e'en bitter truths I cannot fear;
But truth, *my Lord*, is panegyric here.

viii D E D I C A T I O N.

Health to great GLOSTER—nor, thro' love of ease,
 Which all Priests love, let this address displease.
 I ask no favour, not one note I crave,
 And, when this busy brain rests in the grave,
 (For till that time it never can have rest)
 I will not trouble you with one bequest.
 Some humbler friend, my mortal journey done,
 More near in blood, a nephew or a son,
 In that dread hour executor I'll leave;
 For I, alas! have many to receive,
 To give but little—To great GLOSTER *health*;
 Nor let thy true and proper love of wealth
 Here take a false alarm—in purse though poor,
 In spirit I'm right proud, nor can endure
 The mention of a bribe—thy pocket's free,
 I, though a Dedicator, scorn a fee.
 Let thy own offspring all thy fortunes share;
 I would not ALLEN rob, nor ALLEN's heir.

Think not, a thought unworthy thy great soul,
 Which pomps of this world never could controul,
 Which never offer'd up at pow'r's vain shrine,
 Think not that pomp and pow'r can work on mine.
 'Tis not thy name, though that indeed is great,
 'Tis not the tinsel trumpery of state,

'Tis

D E D I C A T I O N. ix

'Tis not thy title, Doctor tho' thou art,
 'Tis not thy mitre, which hath won my heart.
 State is a farce, names are but empty things,
 Degrees are bought, and, by mistaken kings,
 Titles are oft misplac'd; mitres, which shine
 So bright in other eyes, are dull in mine,
 Unless set off by Virtue; who deceives
 Under the sacred sanction of *Lawn Sleeves*,
 Enhances guilt, commits a double sin;
 So fair without, and yet so foul within.
 'Tis not thy outward form, thy easy mein,
 Thy sweet complacency, thy brow serene,
 Thy open front, thy love-commanding eye,
 Where fifty Cupids, as in ambush, lie,
 Which can from sixty to sixteen impart
 The force of love, and point his blunted dart;
 'Tis not thy face, tho' that by Nature's made
 An index to thy soul, tho' there display'd
 We see thy mind at large, and thro' thy skin
 Peeps out that courtesy which dwells within;
 'Tis not thy birth, for that is low as mine,
 Around our heads no lineal glories shine—
 But what is birth—when, to delight mankind,
 Heralds can make those arms they cannot find;
 When thou art to thyself, thy Sire unknown,
 A whole, Welch genealogy *alone*?

x DEDICATION.

No, 'tis thy inward man, thy proper worth,
Thy right just estimation here on earth,
Thy life and doctrine uniformly join'd,
And flowing from that wholesome source thy mind,
Thy known contempt of persecution's rod,
Thy charity for man, thy love of God,
Thy faith in Christ, so well approv'd 'mongst men,
Which now give life, and utterance to my pen.
Thy virtue, not thy rank, demands my lays;
'Tis not the Bishop, but the Saint I praise.
Rais'd by that theme, I soar on wings more strong,
And burst forth into praise with-held too long.

Much did I wish, e'en whilst I kept those sheep,
Which, for my curse, I was ordain'd to keep;
Ordain'd, alas! to keep thro' need, not choice,
Those sheep which never heard their shepherd's voice,
Which did not know, yet would not learn their way,
Which stray'd themselves, yet griev'd that I should
stray,

Those sheep, which my good Father (on his bier
Let filial duty drop the pious tear)
Kept well, yet starv'd himself, e'en at that time,
Whilst I was pure, and innocent of rhyme,
Whilst, sacred dullness ever in my view,
Sleep at my bidding crept from pew to pew,

Much

D E D I C A T I O N. xi

Much did I wish, tho' little could I hope,
A friend in him, who was the friend of POPE.

His hand, said I, my youthful steps shall guide,
And lead me safe where thousands fall beside;
His temper, his experience shall controul,
And hush to peace the tempest of my soul;
His judgment teach me, from the critic school,
How not to err, and how to err by rule;
Instruct me, mingle profit with delight,
Where POPE was wrong, where SHAKESPEARE WAS
not right;

Where they are justly prais'd and where thro' whim,
How little's due to them, how much to him.

Rais'd 'bove the slavery of common rules,
Of common-sense, of modern, ancient schools,
Those feelings banish'd, which mislead us all,
Fools as we are, and which we nature call,
He, by his great example, might impart
A better something, and baptize it Art;
He, all the feelings of my youth forgot,
Might shew me what is taste, by what is not;
By him supported, with a proper pride,
I might hold all mankind as fools beside;
He (should a world, perverse and peevish grown,
Explode his maxims, and assert their own)

Might teach me, like himself, to be content,
 And let their folly be their punishment;
 Might, like himself, teach his adopted son,
 'Gainst all the world, to quote a WARBURTON.

Fool that I was, could I so much deceive
 My soul with lying hopes; could I believe
 That he, the servant of his Maker sworn,
 The servant of his Saviour, would be torn
 From their embrace, and leave that dear employ,
 The cure of souls, his duty and his joy,
 For toys like mine, and waste his precious time,
 On which so much depended, for a rhyme?
 Should he forsake the task he undertook,
 Desert his flock, and break his past'ral crook?
 Should he (forbid it Heaven) so high in place,
 So rich in knowledge, quit the work of Grace,
 And, idly wand'ring o'er the Muse's hill,
 Let the salvation of mankind stand still?

Far, far be that from thee—yes, far from thee
 Be such revolt from Grace, and far from me
 The will to think it—guilt is in the thought—
 Not so, not so, hath WARBURTON been taught,
 Not so learn'd Christ—Recall that day, well-known,
 When (to maintain God's honour—and his own)

He

He call'd blasphemers forth—Methinks I now
 See stern rebuke enthroned on his brow,
 And arm'd with tenfold terrors—from this tongue,
 Where fiery zeal, and Christian fury hung,
 Methinks I hear the deep-ton'd thunders roll,
 And chill with horror ev'ry sinner's soul—
 In vain they strive to fly—flight cannot save,
 And POTTER trembles even in his grave—
 With all the conscious pride of innocence,
 Methinks I hear him, in his own defence,
 Bear witness to himself, whilst all men knew,
 By Gospel rules, his witness to be true.

O glorious man, thy zeal I must commend,
 Tho' it depriv'd me of my dearest friend.
 The real motives of thy anger known,
 WILKES must the justice of that anger own,
 And, could thy bosom have been bar'd to view,
 Pitied himself, in turn had pitied you.

Bred to the law, you wisely took the gown,
 Which I, like *Demas*, foolishly laid down.
 Hence double strength our *Holy Mother* drew:
 Me she got rid of, and made prize of you.
 I, like an idle truant, fond of play,
 Doting on toys, and throwing gems away,
 Grasping

Grasping at shadows, let the substance slip;
 But you, *my Lord*, renounc'd Attorneyship
 With better purpose, and more noble aim,
 And wisely play'd a more substantial game.
 Nor did *Law* mourn, bless'd in her younger son.
 For MANSFIELD does what GLOSTER would have
 done.

Doctor, Dean, Bishop, Gloster, and My Lord,
 If haply these high titles may accord
 With thy meek spirit, if the barren sound
 Of pride delights thee, to the topmost round
 Of fortune's ladder got, despise not one,
 For want of smooth hypocrisy undone,
 Who, far below, turns up his wond'ring eye,
 And, without envy, sees thee plac'd so high,
 Let not thy brain (as brains less potent might)
 Dizzy, confounded, giddy with the height,
 Turn round, and lose distinction, lose her skill
 And wonted powers of knowing good from ill,
 Of sifting truth from falsehood, friends from foes;
 Let GLOSTER well remember, how he rose,
 Nor turn his back on men who made him great;
 Let him not, gorg'd with pow'r, and drunk with
 state,

Forget

DEDICATION. xv

Forget what once he was, tho' now so high;
How low, how mean, and full as poor as I.

* * * * *
* * * * *
* * * * *

* * Cetera defunt.
For Mansfield does what Ghoster would have
done

Doctor, Dean, Bishop, Gilder, and Mr. Lard

If haply these high titles may accord
With thy meek spirit, if the banner round
Of pride delights thee, to the topmost round
Of fortune's ladder got, despite not one
For want of smooth hypocrisy and one
Who, far below, turns up his wondering eye
And, without envy, sees thee placed so high
Let not thy brain's brains let's potent might
Dizzy, confounded, giddy with the sight
Turn round, and lose distinction, lose her skill
And wot not power of knowing good from ill
Of sitting truth from falsehood, friends from foes
Let Ghoster well remember, how he rose
Nor turn his back on men who made him great
Let him not, Goig's with power, and drunk with

State

Forget

It is presumed the sudden death of the Author
will sufficiently apologize for the Dedication
remaining unfinished. *Jno. Churchill*

S E R M O N I.

JAMES V. 16th.

*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous
man availeth much.*

FOR the particular occasion on which these words were spoken, and the relation they bear to what preceded, I shall refer you to the chapter from whence they are taken, and at present consider them as they stand independently, and assure us, that the duty of prayer, when practised by a righteous man, and offered up in a proper manner, is of great efficacy to avert mis-

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fortunes,

fortunes, and procure blessings; premising only, that, by a righteous man we are not to understand one who is perfectly pure, and free from sin, but one who performs his duty to the utmost of his power, and makes up for any infirmity in his Obedience, by the strength of his Faith, and the sincerity of his Repentance.

The duty of prayer is in the present age by many entirely neglected, or imperfectly observed, and by some openly decried. There are many who disallow any other application to God than that of the mind, and not a few who, however constant in the outward forms of prayer, do yet by their lives but too plainly shew that their minds are unaffected. Some too there are, who run into the contrary extreme, who are so unwarrantably attentive to the performance of this duty, as to neglect obligations which
are

are of much greater import, which are more immediately necessary for their own good, and the benefit of society, and which of consequence must be more agreeable to the will, and conducive to the glory, of God.

Whilst mistakes like these prevail, a consideration of the duty of prayer cannot be out of season; it cannot prejudice those who best understand it, and may be serviceable to those who do not.

Prayer is a solemn act of worshipping the Supreme Being; wherein we, on the one hand, acknowledge our weakness and indigence, on the other his power and ability to afford us relief; it naturally implies some defect in him who offers it up, and some authority in him to whom it is offered to pardon and amend it; it suppo-

ses God to be the Maker and Governor of all things, and so gracious and condescending, so potent and absolute in his nature, as always to be ready to hear, and able to redress the Grievances of his Creatures, so that this duty is founded on the infinite goodness and power of God; he is infinitely good, and therefore willing, infinitely powerful, and therefore able to relieve us; and for these reasons he is, and he alone can be, the proper object of our Prayers.

The Heathens themselves, as they were fully persuaded of these perfections in God, and of the great need in which they stood of having them exerted in their behalf, were also convinced that it was their duty to pray to him; and this duty was heartily acknowledged, earnestly recommended, and strictly practised by the wisest and soberest among them. The Scriptures, as they
every

every where abound with earnest and pathetick exhortations to the religious performance hereof, so they afford us many strong motives which the Heathens could not have; they supply us with the names of many great and good men who were exemplary in the performance of it, amongst whom, as in all other works of Righteousness, our blessed Lord shines with distinguished lustre; they fully instruct us both as to the Object to, and the manner in which they ought to be offered; they apply themselves to our fears by the most severe threats, to our hopes by the most delightful promises, supplying us with an encouragement to, and laying a foundation for the performance of this duty, which the Heathens could not have, in the veracity of God himself; who hath said and cannot lie; who hath declared and cannot

deny himself, that they who ask shall receive.

The reasonableness of this duty in general appears from the slightest attention to the particular branches of which it consists. If we consider Man merely as a Creature, as just come out of the hands of his Maker, as raised into being from the dust of the earth, and, besides many other, endued with those distinguishing privileges, Reason and Immortality, sure nothing can be more reasonable than for him to pay his most submissive and reverential homage to that Being who employs Omnipotence in conferring Benefits upon him; to exert his reason in the praise of him who gave it, and endeavour to recommend himself to his infinite goodness, lest he fall under the terrors of his Almighty Power. The ideas of
Power

S E R M O N I.

7

Power are in themselves great and terrible; it naturally inspires us with awe and reverence, even when it is lodged in human hands, whence it is liable to be snatched by innumerable accidents, and where it hangs but on the slender thread of life. What must it do then, when we consider it infinite and unbounded, placed in the hands of a Being, who is subject to no accidents; whose existence is not bounded by any time, but extends itself unlimited, unimpaired through all ages? What Respect, what Homage, what Adoration can be too great, when paid to such a Being? Where can we find an office more agreeable to our Reason, where a better employment for our Immortality.

If we consider Man as a Creature immersed in sin, corrupt in his very nature, and prone to all evil, continually tempted by

the Devil and the World from without, and betrayed by his own violent and headstrong passions from within, upon such a dismal review, sure nothing can be more reasonable, than to have recourse to his Almighty Father, to acknowledge his original weakness and infirmities, his actual sins and transgressions, to express his aversion to, and resolution against them, unto him who is the perfection of Purity and Holiness; to beg Pardon and Forgiveness of him who delighteth in mercy, and desireth not the death of a Sinner; and to pray for the assistance of Grace from him, who giveth to them which ask, who hath promised to send us the comfort of his holy spirit, who delighteth to dwell in the heart of the sincere and contrite.

If we consider Man as subject to all kinds of misery, surrounded with difficulties and troubles

troubles which he can neither prevent nor remedy, with dangers which he can neither guard against nor repel, and with wants which he can neither foresee nor relieve, we shall surely see abundant reason for him to apply to God, to lay himself open, to make his distresses known, and pray to God that he will deliver him out of all his troubles, defend him in all his dangers, and relieve him in all his wants. When men are under any pressure or calamity, they naturally apply to such of their fellow creatures as they think are inclined by the goodness of their disposition, and enabled by their power or wealth to be of service to them: if this is reasonable and prudent, it is certainly much more so to make our addresses to God, whose goodness as much surpasses human goodness, as his power is beyond human power, who hath such an absolute command over trouble, sickness, and any other

other adversity, that he saith unto them Go, and they go; who is of such perfect Goodness, that he sustaineth the Brutes, and feedeth the young Ravens which call upon him, that he openeth his hand, and filleth all things living with plenteousness.

To turn our eyes from these melancholy scenes of sin and misery, if we reflect upon the situation of Man, how impossible it was for him to avoid sinning, and how impossible to avoid the punishment due to it; if we consider him delivered from that terrible dilemma, and if not secured from sinning, directed, which is almost equivalent, how to escape the consequences of it; if we consider God the Father as ordaining the means of our Redemption, God the Son as performing them, and God the Holy Ghost as residing in, and sanctifying us, how can we abstain from breaking out
in

in the lively eloquence of the Psalmist, Praise the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me praise his holy name, Praise the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all his benefits. Such an unexpected, such an undeserved change in our affairs, so great a deliverance, such a mighty salvation as it must necessarily excite our joy, so should it quicken our gratitude, and incline us to return thee thanks, O God, as for our Creation, Preservation, and all the Blessings of this life, so above all, for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of Grace, and for the hope of Glory.

If we consider, that the whole race of men are mutually related to each other, that their concerns are too closely connected to bear a separation, that they came out of the hands of the same Creator, are
sustained

sustained by the Providence of the same Preserver, and purchased by the blood of the same Redeemer, we cannot but acknowledge the reasonableness of the Duty which the Scriptures lay upon every man, of praying for his neighbour as well as for himself; of offering up his petitions to Almighty God, and interceding for them, that he will turn from them whatever may do them harm, and be pleased to give unto them what he sees needful either for their bodies or their souls.

On the whole, if it is reasonable that the Creature should acknowledge his dependance on the Creator, that those who have done amiss should confess it, and ask forgiveness, that those who stand in need of many good, and in fear of many evil things, should petition for the obtaining of the one, and preventing of the other, if
it

it is reasonable to return thanks for benefits received, and evils prevented, to love our brethren, and to pay regard to the concerns of those persons with whom our own are connected, then it is in all these several respects highly reasonable, that we should discharge the duty of Prayer to Almighty God.

This is so evident, that we should scarce believe, did we not daily see it, that a rational creature could live in the gross neglect and open contempt of a duty, which, merely as a rational creature, he cannot but know that he ought to perform; which is not more strongly recommended by Scripture, than by Reason itself, the darling idol of the modern world; and the contempt of which must not only rank him amongst the irreligious, but which he may perhaps think worse, amongst the unreasonable part
of

of the creation. Notwithstanding this there are men in the world, and those mighty Pretenders to Reason, who openly decry this duty, at least all the external parts of it, well knowing that without them the duty itself cannot long subsist, and artfully found their objections against it, upon an acknowledgement of, and a seeming veneration for, the divine attributes, and the honour of God's nature.

If, say they, God is of infinite knowledge, as those who pray to him must certainly allow, what occasion is there for us to confess our sins, and express our sorrow for them, to lay open our wants and necessities to him, who by the necessary perfection of his nature sees into our hearts, and discerns every motion there much plainer than we can possibly express them.

Such

Such objectors will do well to consider, that our Prayers are not intended to give any information to God, which he before had not, but to implant deeply in our own breasts a proper sense of what we have done, and a due estimation of what we want; so that the pardon of our sins, and supply of our necessities may have their due weight with us. Our thoughts come upon us so suddenly, and so quickly pass away, that it is scarce possible accurately to remember the thoughts even of a few hours; but when we give them birth, and bring them forth in proper words, they are then strongly imprest on our minds, and by a constant repetition of the same means by which they first struck root, must always live and flourish in our memories. When the thoughts which we entertain upon a survey of our sins and necessities so far influence us as to incline us to Prayer,

when

when we bring them forth before the Most High, cloathed in proper expressions and attended with suitable gestures, they are thereby most deeply imprinted on our minds, and by a steady and uniform performance of this duty, are at last fixed in such strong colours, as never to be discharged; whereas had they never issued from the closet of our hearts, they might have been strangled in the birth, or proved the children but of a melancholy moment.

To be in fault, and ashamed to confess it and ask pardon, to be in want, and ashamed to acknowledge it and ask relief, are most certain signs of an obstinate and proud temper; a temper not at all qualified to receive blessings from God, who resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Before we can expect favours from God, we must entirely root out these faults, and in their
stead

stead implant humility and meekness; nor is there any better way of enabling us so to do, no other way of shewing that we have so done, than the performance of the duty of Prayer.

In the common affairs of this world we do not expect our faults to be pardoned, nor our wants to be relieved before they are made known; and surely in point of common decency we cannot expect inestimable blessings from a Being such as God is, upon easier terms than those which we perform to our Brethren, for things of little or no consequence. However extensive the divine knowledge may be, how intimately soever God may be acquainted with our wants before we cry unto him, yet we must not expect that he will interest himself in our behalf, until we shew by Prayer, that we are known not only to him, but also

to ourselves, the most difficult but most necessary of all knowledge, which should always accompany, and can scarce subsist, without the performance of this duty.

But, say they again, though it may be reasonable and necessary to pray to a Being of infinite knowledge, surely it cannot be so to pray to a Being of perfect Goodness, who is readier to hear than we to pray, readier to forgive our sins, and relieve our wants, than we are even to acknowledge them.

Those who argue thus have very mistaken notions of the divine nature; they consider God's Attributes abstractedly from, nay, in opposition to, each other, and thereby make him inconsistent with himself. We ought always to consider the perfections of the deity as compatible with each other, as moving in the most perfect harmony, as
being

being but so many rays derived from, and centered in the same Body of Light and Perfection. His mercy is not inconsistent with his Justice, neither does his wisdom exclude, or is it excluded by his Goodness; he is infinitely merciful, in such a manner as to be, at the same time, infinitely just; infinitely wise, in such a manner as to be infinitely good. We must not therefore entertain such high notions of any one Perfection, as to exalt it at the expence of any other; we must not, as those do who make God's goodness an argument against prayer, magnify his goodness at the expence of his Wisdom. For whatever goodness it might shew, yet certainly it would be no mark of Wisdom to confer Blessings on us, whatsoever we stood in need of, without our petitioning for them. Those persons can never be the proper objects of God's goodness who are above praying for the

effects of it. The tenderest Father breathing, although he plainly discerns in the whole behaviour of an offending Child that he is heartily sorry for his Offence, doth not extend to him the usual expressions of his Love and Favour, till he makes acknowledgement of his crime, and asks pardon for it; neither will God, how great soever his delight in mercy and goodness, exert those amiable attributes in our behalf, till we call upon him by Prayer and Supplication. If our wants were to be redressed, and our desires fulfilled without any thing done on our parts, we might impute such blessings to any rather than the true cause, and so deprive God of the glory of his dispensations; whereas now, when they are made, as it were, the consequence of our Prayers, we cannot but be sensible, that to God we owe them, and to God we ought to be thankful for them.

But,

But, say they, though it may be reasonable and necessary to pray to a Being of infinite knowledge and goodness, surely it cannot be so, to pray to a Being of absolute immutability, who is not a Man that he should lie, nor the son of Man, that he should repent; in whom there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning; so that our prayers cannot have any effect to the changing of his purpose, and reversing his decrees.

God's threats and promises have always a regard to the Behaviour of Men, and have a condition implied if not exprest; so that those who fall off from virtue unto vice, instead of being heirs to his promises, become liable to his threats; and those who return from vice to virtue, instead of being obnoxious to his threats become entitled to his promises; the change

is not in God, but in us; his fixt and immutable purpose is to pursue vice with punishment, and virtue with reward, through all the varying scenes of man's behaviour; and therefore, upon a change in that, he alters his measures, not thereby becoming mutable, but continuing constant to his first resolution, of punishing the wicked, and rewarding the good. It is therefore no diminution to the divine immutability to listen to the Petitions of his Creatures, and grant them those blessings upon their praying to him, which he had withheld from them upon their neglecting to do it; to supply or prevent those wants which he had brought or determined to bring upon them, when they acknowledge their dependance and confidence in his goodness, together with those other virtues, which Prayer does naturally suppose, and outwardly express.

Trifling

Trifling as these objections are found on examination, they are by much the strongest and most plausible that the enemies of Prayer have been able to advance; they are of such a nature as to bring the understanding, as well as the integrity, of those who broach them into disrepute, and make us doubtful which to despise most, the wickedness of their hearts, or the weakness of their heads. Little can be offered for those who object to the mysteries of our most holy religion, but less can be said for those who object to the duties of it; the former, though not against, are yet much above our reason, but the latter lie exactly level to our understandings, and are not less strongly recommended by Reason, than by Revelation; they are such as the heathen Philosophers were proud to embellish their systems with, though they

cannot be digested by some of our politer Christians.

It is not however to be wondered at, that those who go on in a course of wickedness, should object to duties so contrary to their headstrong passions, and be willing to overthrow those laws which lay a restraint upon their inclinations. It is Interest, and not Reason, which speaks in them, they are against Religion upon no other account, but because Religion is against them, and think Christianity unreasonable for no other cause, but that they wish it so. In general it may be observed, that the lives of those who object to this duty of Prayer, or any other enjoined in Scripture, are sufficient to confute their objections, which can come with no strength, but from the mouths of those
who

who appear in their lives to be at least good moral men: but such, I trust, are in a much fairer way of believing the mysteries than objecting to the duties of the Christian Religion, which is not less remarkable for matters of Faith than Practice, for the Revelation of truths, than the perfecting of virtue.

Now to God the Father, &c. &c.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N II.

JAMES V. 16th.

*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous
man availeth much.*

THE Nature of Prayer, the Grounds
on which that Duty is founded, and
the reasonableness of our performing it,
are what I apprehend few can be ignorant
of; none indeed, who are constant in the
worship of God and the service of the
Sanctuary. But I fear, we have not the
same reason to believe, that the right man-
ner of performing this duty is so generally
known, or at least that it is so generally
practised; since very slight observation
may

may assure us, that a great part even of those who strictly comply with the formalities of prayer, are either ignorant of the manner in which it should be performed so as to prove effectual, or indifferent whether it proves effectual or not. I shall make it my business therefore to shew,

First, The qualifications requisite to make our prayers acceptable to God—and in order to engage us more heartily therein, shall,

Secondly, Mention those advantages which we may reasonably expect from a due discharge of that Duty.

There are, it is to be feared, many persons in the world who imagine themselves worthy performers of this duty, merely because

because they are regular and constant in saying over a few prayers without rectifying the temper of their minds, or altering the method of their lives. But alas! how much are these mistaken! No petition can possibly be acceptable to God, which is not offered up with proper Affections, which is not attended with proper Actions. Was it merely the repetition of a Prayer which called down Blessings from above, those who pray through ostentation, and a desire of being seen of men, or through prudential and interested motives, might expect them equally with the sincere and contrite, and those who, like the heathen, and our modern enthusiasts, make use of long prayers, might expect blessings so much greater than others, as their prayers are longer. But of the first of these our Saviour has assured us that they have their reward; that is, they have the good opinion
of

of men, which they sought after, and must not expect any reward from God; of the latter, he implies to us that they are not heard for their much speaking; and of all in general whose prayers are outside shew, he pronounces, that the Lord detesteth those who approach him with their lips, whilst their hearts are far from him.

Sincerity is the life of prayer; it is that which makes it an act of true devotion, and of high price in the sight of God; and this virtue we may be sure we have in a good degree, when we endeavour to purify our minds from all iniquity, and ask nothing but with a good and upright intention. God, who sees the heart, will not merely consider whether the things we pray for are good in themselves, but whether they will be so in our use of them; whether we shall employ them to such
good

good and virtuous purposes, as may promote his glory and our own good. If we therefore pray with a corrupt intention, we must not expect that God will incline his ear to us; for the Apostle assures us, that on this account many ask, and receive not, because they ask amiss, that they may consume it upon their lusts.

To sincerity we must also add humility. This virtue naturally arises from the duty itself, the performance of which supposes want in us who ask, and power in him of whom we ask; dependance on our parts, and sovereignty on God's. This humility consists not only in being sensible of and acknowledging our wants, but also in being sensible of, and acknowledging our unworthiness to have them redrest. The man who is not sensible of his wants, will not be sensible of relief; he who feels his necessities,

necessities, and yet is too proud to acknowledge them, will be too proud also to acknowledge the hand by which he is relieved; he lastly, who is both sensible of his wants, and humble enough to acknowledge them, but yet is puffed up with an high opinion of his own worthiness, will impute the relief of them not to God's free mercies, but to a consideration of his own deserts; instead of coming boldly to the throne of Grace, he will come rashly to the throne of Judgement; instead of pleading and relying upon the merits of Christ, he will plead and rely upon his own. To make our prayers therefore acceptable to God, and our humility complete, we must acknowledge that our sins and wants are great, but our unworthiness to have them pardoned and relieved still greater; we must confess that when we have done our best, we are but unprofitable servants; we
must

must throw ourselves upon the mercy of God, and plead no merits but those of Christ.

This humility of the heart will naturally produce that of the body, or a grave and reverend deportment in our devotions; expressive of the low opinion which we have of ourselves, and of the high one which we entertain of God. When we are in the presence of an earthly monarch we place a particular regard on all our words and actions, so that they may declare the high veneration we have of his majesty and power; and if this is reasonable, surely it is much more so, that we should observe the same method when we come into the presence of the king of Heaven, and express the utmost reverence when we consider that the place we stand on is holy ground, is sanctified and consecrated

crated by the gracious presence of God himself.

To these qualifications of an acceptable prayer, we must also add that of Confidence, or a firm persuasion that we shall obtain what we ask for, if it is expedient for us. Upon first coming into the presence of God, and considering his nature and our own, we should naturally be more apt to fear and to despair, than to repose any confidence in him. To consider him as exalted in majesty and power, ourselves as weak and impotent; him as a most pure and holy Being, ourselves as stained and polluted with sin, must breed in us apprehensions far different from those pleasing sensations which Confidence inspires. But when we consider that he is a God of Mercy, long-suffering, and of great goodness, that he so loved the world, as

to send his only son to suffer for it, that he hath commanded us to pray to him, and promised to hear and grant our requests, the fear which we before felt immediately subsides, and Confidence, in its highest sense, arises in its stead; Confidence of being heard, forgiven, and relieved. We then find that not to pray to him is to disobey his authority, and not to believe that our Prayers shall be heard and granted, is to derogate from his Goodness, and distrust his promises. We must not therefore let our humility so far prevail as to plunge us into despair, or abate our Confidence; nor our confidence get so much the better, as to overthrow our humility, and hurry us into presumption; but let both move in their proper sphere, and keep our souls in a due temper; when we consider our wants and unworthiness let us be humble, when we consider God's mercies let us be confident,
and

and so offer up our Prayers a reasonable and acceptable sacrifice.

Another qualification of an acceptable Prayer, is Attention; this is not to be acquired so easily as some may imagine; our thoughts are in a perpetual flux, and of so volatile a nature, that it is no easy matter to keep them fixt and steady, even when we are retired from the world, and all outward objects are taken away. The mind is ever roving, and so distracted with the succession of fresh ideas which arise involuntarily in her, that it is no contemptible task, after she has made choice of any one, to shut out the rest, and keep herself attentive to that alone. Besides, the cares of this world are apt to intrude, and interrupt us, the enticing allurements of pleasures are ever ready to insinuate themselves, and the Devil is always at hand to second every in-

strument, and improve every opportunity of diverting our thoughts from the service of God. As our tempers and circumstances are well known to him, he is particularly diligent in the time of our devotions to unhinge our thoughts, by supplying us with such objects and ideas as he thinks will best serve his wicked purposes. It is evident therefore, that our utmost care and resolution is necessary to acquire this virtue of Attention; and in order the better to effect it, we should rightly weigh the Majesty of him whom we pray to, and the importance of the things which we pray for. The man who petitions an earthly King for such things as are necessary to support his life, or for the pardon of some crime which forfeits it, must naturally be supposed to have his attention wholly engrossed with a consideration of the Majesty before whom he stands, and of the

the vast consequences of those things which are the subjects of his petition; and the same degree of Attention may we hope to obtain, if we will convince ourselves, that in our Prayers we come before the King of Kings, and that what we petition for is of the last consequence to us, no less than the supply of all our wants, no less than the forgiveness of all our sins.

If we thus use every method to settle ourselves into an habit of Attention, if we endeavour to repress every wandering thought in the birth, and are heartily sorry when they force themselves into our minds, if we sincerely pray that God will enable us, by his grace, to overcome them, and give us this virtue to a greater degree, than our natural infirmities will permit us to acquire of ourselves, we have then all the reason in the world to conclude, that God will crown

our endeavours with success, or otherwise accept of the sincere endeavour, instead of the perfect performance; nor will the author of our nature require more of us, than our nature will enable us to perform, but will look upon our infirmities with an eye of pity and compassion, and extend his grace and pardon to them.

To Attention we must add Fervency: it is not a cold and unmeaning repetition of Prayers which calls down blessings from above; it is not a mere form of words, but the effectual fervent Prayer, which availeth much. This qualification greatly depends upon Temper and Constitution. Those therefore should not be cast down who feel not these holy raptures in such a degree as others may seem to do, nor should those of a more sanguine complexion be over and above measure elated, when they feel these transports,

transports, and blasphemously fancy that they are, in the language of a modern Enthusiast, sensibly actuated by the Holy Ghost. Fervency, no doubt, is a very necessary and happy qualification of Prayer; it introduces us to a more intimate familiarity with God, and at the same time it procures us blessings on earth, in some measure gives us a foretaste of Heaven. But great caution is requisite, that this fervency be such as is required by God; it should be a gentle, pleasing, heavenly flame, and not an headstrong and outrageous fire, which hurries men into Enthusiasm; it should, like the Sun, not only afford a barren warmth to the soul, but such an heat, as may promote fruitfulness in well doing.

To the forgoing qualifications we must add Perseverance. We must not imagine,

that a transitory spark of devotion will inflame our Prayers so as to make them a sacrifice acceptable to God. Some heavy misfortune, or impending danger, some stroke of sickness, some bad consequence of our evil courses; some more than usually severe remonstrance of conscience, may make the wickedest man alive, in his agony and fright, betake himself to Prayer, till his danger is over and his conscience lulled asleep. But the man who is really in earnest, and concerned for the success of his prayers, who is willing to perform the conditions, that he may be entitled to the blessings which God has promised, in whatever state he is, whether in sickness or in health, in prosperity or adversity, perseveres steadily in an habit of Prayer; he reflects, that those who are so often in want, so often entangled in sin, should often pray for the relief of the one and the forgive-

forgiveness of the other; and he considers it as his great blessing, that in his distresses he has so kind a God to whom he may betake himself, so prevailing a means as Prayer by which he may apply to him. If his desires are not immediately granted, he does not desist from this duty, but perseveres inviolably in it, firmly believing that he shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. God may for a time, in his wise and good providence, withhold our desires from us, and yet fulfill them afterwards, when they more contribute to his glory or our good; and the parable of the unjust Judge, and poor Widow, doth very strongly enforce on us that duty, which our Saviour intended to confirm in it, always to pray, and not to faint.

To

To the abovementioned qualifications of an acceptable Prayer we must add, lastly, a lively Faith in Christ; such a Faith as may be a proper foundation for us to build the other qualifications upon, such a Faith as doth not overthrow good works, but produceth them, herself working by Love. The light of natural reason directs us to offer up our Prayers to God only; but the Scriptures further inform us, that they must be offered up through Christ. It is by his merits only, that we can expect to have our sins forgiven, and our wants supplied. He is the merciful High Priest, who having felt our infirmities has learned to compassionate them; having experienced our distresses, is become willing to relieve them; and having borne temptation, is both able and willing to assist us in, and deliver us out of it: he receives our prayers, offers them

them up to God, intercedes in our behalf, and backs our petitions with his own prevailing merits; so that there is no good thing which we may not hope for, through his mediation.

Pleasure, Honour, and Profit, are the three great idols of the modern world, and engross the adoration of much the greatest part of mankind, the Sensual, the Ambitious, and the Covetous. It is through the inducements of these prevailing passions, that our hearts are entirely weaned from the consideration of another life, and rivetted on this; it is one or all of these which make us sit loose to the duty of Prayer, and think every moment spent therein precious time lost from the pursuit of our darling objects. But if it will appear (as to an unprejudiced person I am sure it will) that Prayer is the best means of afford-
ing

ing not only one of these advantages separately, but all of them conjunctively, and each of them in a greater degree than we could enjoy without it, then we certainly have a very strong argument to enforce this duty, as well upon the interests as the consciences of mankind,

The man of Pleasure may boast of his enjoyments, and those noble indulgencies of his sensuality, in which the Brutes may vie with him, nay, in one respect, far exceed him, in that they feel no remorse, no compunction afterwards, and to such an one (whilst he continues such) it will be in vain to represent the more solid, lasting, and superior pleasures which are to be found in a sincere performance of the duty of Prayer. But if we make our appeal to the hearts of those who are inflamed with true devotion, and can relish the exercises

ercises of Piety, we may be easily satisfied, that one moment spent in the discharge of this duty, will much outweigh an whole life spent in the indulgence of Sensuality and Libertinism. So much as the Soul is superior to the body, so much are the pleasures of the one beyond those of the other. Corporeal gratifications are violent, but not lasting; they soon cloy, and pall upon the appetite, and, notwithstanding the charm of variety, grow tedious and insipid. The pleasures of the soul are more sedate and temperate, more lasting and permanent; the more we use, the more we relish them, the longer we are acquainted with them, the more lovely they appear, and the stronger they engage us. But of all the pleasures of the soul, those which she receives from the communication of God in the exercise of Prayer, are undoubtedly the most excellent, when she mounts
upon

upon the wings of Devotion, and, divested of earthly thoughts and affections, penetrates into the highest Heaven, and enjoys the glorious presence, and the gracious conversation of her God. Sensual gratifications leave a sting behind them, which the greatest libertine in the world cannot always appease; he must sometimes in his cooler hours, feel the terrors, and groan beneath the burden of an accusing conscience; but the pleasures resulting from Prayer, as they are free from all disquietudes at the time, so they are not terminated with the exercise itself, but diffuse a solid and lasting satisfaction over the soul; and the action is not only pleasant in the performance, but also in our consideration of it afterwards. A pleasure this, which Vice may always wish for, but never can enjoy. We may therefore with great truth assert, that whatever the world may think, and wicked men
may

may talk of pleasure, it is never to be found till we become acquainted with God, till we are made sensible of his love, and enjoy that happy friendship, and communion with him, which is only expressed and maintained by Prayer, and spiritual exercises.

But the performance of this duty is not only attended with Pleasure, but Honour also. To enjoy the intimacy and friendship of a monarch, to be admitted to his Presence at all times, to be at liberty to present our petitions, and be assured of success, is deservedly esteemed a great honour; but how much greater is it to enjoy the friendship of the King of Kings, to have freedom of access at all times, to lay open our wants, and make our distresses known, with that freedom and liberty which a man useth to his friend. A mighty privilege
this

this surely! an honour as much greater than the familiarity of an earthly king, as God is superior to the greatest monarch; an honour, which is not to be sought through difficulties, dangers, and uncertainties, but may be easily, safely, and certainly obtained by the meanest man on earth; an honour, which does not depend upon the breath of an unstable and misjudging man, but on the favour of an immutable and all-wise God; an honour which is not to be acquired by violating our integrity, and contradicting the frame of our nature, but by preserving and complying with it; which is not to be sought through the labyrinth of lies, flattery, and deceit, but in the plain road of truth, sincerity, and honesty; which is not to be obtained by envy, hatred, and ambition, but by love, charity, and humility; an honour which will not leave us in the grave,
but

but accompany us to, and be perfected in another life.

To the consideration of Pleasure and Honour, let us add that of Profit also; and Profit redounding to us both in temporal and spiritual matters. Prayer is the best means of obtaining God's favour for the acquisition of what we want, and the Preservation of what we have. If we search the scriptures, we cannot but observe the great prevalence of this duty with God, and have instances, in the historical parts of them, of the great temporal blessings which are to be procured by it, which are at large set forth by Solomon.

If thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy; if Heaven be shut up, and there be no rain; if there be in the land famine, or pestilence, or if thy people

go out to battle against their enemy, then, if they pray towards this place, and confess thy name, hear thou their Prayer in Heaven, thy dwelling place, deliver them from their affliction, and maintain their cause.

Thus, according to Solomon, if a nation labours under the miseries of an unsuccessful war, Prayer is the surest means to procure a glorious victory, and a happy peace; if the windows of Heaven be shut up, and drought and barrenness prevail in the land, this is the most effectual method to obtain the fertile showers, so that the earth may bring forth her fruits, that the hills may dance and skip, and the valleys laugh and sing for joy; is the air tainted with noxious vapours, and doth Pestilence, hand in hand with Famine, stalk in our streets, the holy breathing of an upright heart in prayer will
purge

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purge the air, and procure for us health and plenty. In a word, whatever misfortunes we labour under, whether public or private, a due discharge of this duty is able to remove them, and obtain God's blessing upon ourselves, and families, our friends and acquaintance, upon every thing we have, and every thing we do.

To these advantages, which relate only to this life, let us also add those which naturally lead us to happiness hereafter. Let us reflect what an increase of grace, what a confirmation of faith, what a quickening of hope we may expect herefrom; and lastly, let us reflect how much Prayer must conduce to the advancement of virtue, and holiness of living.

It naturally breeds in us due apprehensions of God and ourselves; it sets before

us the perfections of the Deity in their full glory; it supposes them, as to his moral attributes, the objects of our imitation, and makes them the subjects of our contemplation; so that a constant performance of this duty can scarce fail of awakening our emulation, and as it were insensibly conforming us to the image of God. As it is scarce possible for a great sinner to continue constant in this duty, so is it as unlikely for a man who continues constant in Prayer to adhere to any wilful sin. Prayer is the natural enemy of Sin; it cannot consist with it, but must either conquer or be conquered by it; Prayer is the natural friend and ally of Holiness, and cannot subsist without it, so as to be worthy the name of Prayer; Prayer has a natural tendency to produce holiness, and holiness is absolutely necessary to sanctify our Prayers.

Now to God the Father, &c.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N III.

MATHEW vi. 9th.

Our Father which art in Heaven.

AFTER our Saviour had given his disciples a charge not to imitate the hypocrites, who prayed standing in the synagogues, and at the corners of the streets, that they might be seen of men, nor to follow the example of the heathen, who used vain repetitions, and thought they should be heard for their much speaking, he proceeds to direct them in what manner they should offer up their prayers, and delivers that form which hath justly been

the admiration of all ages, and the divine pattern whereby the Christian church hath modelled her devotions,

If we consider the Person who gave this Prayer to us, it claims our highest regard upon his account; or if we duly weigh the value of the gift itself, it deserves our especial esteem upon its own. The Person who gave it to us, was no other than our blessed Lord, who knew the wants and infirmities of our nature, being man, and the properest manner in which we could petition for the redress and relief of them, being God. The Prayer itself, whether we consider the order and harmony of it, the connexion of the parts, or the beauty of the whole, is worthy of the highest admiration. It is so plain, and perspicuous, that the weakest capacity may understand it; so short and concise, that the weakest
memory

memory may retain it; so full and comprehensive, that all our wants may very properly be reduced within the compass of it; in a word, it is of such intrinsic worth, that unbelievers must admire, though none but Christians can worthily repeat it.

Our church hath shewn that deference to this Prayer, that she hath inserted it in every distinct office of the whole Liturgy, rightly judging, that it would diffuse a brightness around it, and atone for the imperfections of those services amongst which it was placed; sensible that there must be imperfections in all human compositions (though, vanity apart, our Liturgy is as perfect a work as humanity must ever hope to reach) she endeavours, by the frequent repetition of this Prayer, where all is perfect, all is worthy of the great author, to make up for her own defects; and pro-

vidently considering how unsettled the mind of man is, how perpetually roving from one idea to another, even during the time of prayer, she hath wisely contrived to recall and fix his wandering thoughts, which the chains of human eloquence are too weak to bind, by frequently calling upon him to join in the repetition of that Prayer, which, if we had not the word of God for it, would of itself proclaim its divine original.

The same regard which the church pays to this prayer in her publick services, doth it become every pious Christian to pay to it in his private devotions. Though, the soul pouring out herself before her Maker in secret, is left at greater liberty than in the great congregation, and is not bound by set forms of human composition, yet even there she is not freed from this form,
and

and if she hath any true judgment of the real value of things, will not desire to be. Man, retired from the world, may take a greater scope, more explicitly dwell upon his wants, and acknowledge his sins; but, after all, he will find them here summed up and epitomized in such a manner, and in such words, as will put the highest eloquence of man to the blush.

As the good man will always use this Prayer, because Christ hath commanded it, so the wise man will use it, because he can find none that is comparable with it; it is the only Prayer which many, and the best which all can repeat; it is, in a word, that Prayer which the good Christian will regulate all his devotions by, and which he will never omit to make a part of them.

Thus

Thus much observed in general, I shall make it my business to set before you, in as plain and practical a manner as possible, the true purport of each part of this divine Prayer, to mention the proper affections, and enforce the respective duties which ought to accompany our repetition of it, beginning with Our Father which art in Heaven. In my consideration of which words I shall shew,

First, In what respects God is said to be our Father.

Secondly, Why we are taught in our Prayers to make use of the name of Father, rather than any other.

Thirdly, Why we are instructed to say our, and not my Father.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, In what respect God is said to be in Heaven.

Fifthly and lastly, Why we are taught to make a particular mention of God's residence in Heaven, in our Prayers.

One of the respects in which God is said to be our Father, is Creation. This is a language usual even with Heathen writers, who acknowledging God to be the Maker of the world, do frequently stile him the Father of it; supposing the act of Creation to be equivalent to that of generation, and that we are as much the children of him who created us in general, as of that individual person who begat us in particular. In this respect, God is the Father of all things, and the generations of the Heaven and the Earth, confess his Paternity; the rain claims him for a Father, and the drops

drops of dew declare their having been begotten by him; but in a more eminent and exalted sense he is the Father of Man, having created him after his own image; whence Adam is called the Son of God, and Man may more especially say with the Prophet, Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?

Preservation is another reason for our calling God Father, and the continuation of our existence a perpetual obligation on us to make use of that name. If the first giving of being is a proper foundation of Paternity, the preservation of that Being, which is not improperly stiled a Continued Creation, must be a foundation of Paternity likewise; so that God, who is our Father in right of having graciously created us, is still farther so, in right of having no less graciously preserved us.

Redemption

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Redemption is another reason for our calling God Father. The disobedience of our first parents brought themselves and their posterity into so miserable an estate, their nature was so corrupted, their understanding so darkened, and their will so perverse, that it was impossible for them to fulfil the law of nature, and without fulfilling it, it was absolutely certain, that they must fall into condemnation. In this deplorable condition, the mercy of God regarded us; he made a covenant with his only begotten Son, that he should come into the world, and die for mankind, and, upon the merit of that, cancel the handwriting of the law, which bore so hard upon us; that he should afford us easier conditions, greater assistances, and more glorious promises, that he should deprive Sin of her strength, swallow up Death in Victory, and lead Captivity captive; that he

he should redeem us from the claim of Hell, and reinstate us in our title to the joys of Heaven. For this reason therefore it is also, that we confess the Paternity of God, that we joyfully look upon our Creator and Preserver as amiably cloathed with the mercies of a Redeemer, and as thereby acquiring a fresh title to the name of Father, in that he hath begotten us from the death of Sin, unto the life of Righteousness.

Regeneration is another reason for our calling God Father. In respect of Creation, and Preservation, all things in general may call upon God by this name; in respect of those many excellent endowments by which human nature is exalted above the inferior parts of the creation, and in which she bears the image of God, the whole race of men may with equal propriety make use of this appellation; and the

the Paternity arising from Redemption is as universal as the Satisfaction of Christ, who died for all men; but in respect of Regeneration, no one can call God Father, who is not actually entered into the Gospel Covenant, and become a member of Jesus Christ, who hath not been sprinkled with the laver of Regeneration, and sanctified by the Holy Ghost; whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God. If we consider indeed the wonderful alteration which is made in us by the gracious operations of God's holy Spirit in our Regeneration, how thoroughly we are purified when baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire, upon what different principles we think, speak, and act, we shall readily see that such an alteration may justly be stiled a new birth, we who have undergone it new Creatures, and God who hath perfected it in us, and created us in good works

works unto Christ Jesus, upon this account also a Father to us.

Adoption is another reason for our calling God Father. It hath been usual among men, for those who are childless to adopt the children of others, and to confer the same obligations on, and expect the same affection and obedience from them, as if they were their own offspring. Thus hath God dealt with us; he hath predestinated us to the adoption of Children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, and hath given us the spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. But the motives on which men adopt children, and those on which God adopts us, are widely different. They fly to adoption as the last resource and comfort of their solitary condition, as an artificial means of supplying themselves with what Nature hath denied them, and in expectation

tion of pleasure and blessing to themselves. Whereas God hath adopted us, not for his own, but for our sake; not that he may be a Father, but that we may be children; the love is all his, the advantage all our own.

Having thus seen in what respects we call God Father, I proceed, Secondly, to shew, Why we are taught in our prayers to make use of the name of Father, rather than any other.

If we consider with what affections of the mind our prayers ought always to be accompanied, with what humility and reverence, with what love and confidence, with what resolution of submission and obedience, we shall find that no other name could so naturally inspire us with them, as this of Father. The idea of

Omnipotence is great and terrible, and, abstractedly considered, will indeed sufficiently excite our humility and reverence, but by no means our love. The idea of infinite Goodness is truly amiable and lovely, but, considered in itself, not at all calculated to raise in us humility and fear. The idea of perfect Justice will breed despair, and the consideration of infinite Mercy create presumption rather than confidence. Eternity and Immensity strike us with admiration, but are above our comprehension; and perfect Holiness and Purity, though exceeding lovely in themselves, are too bright and dazzling for the eyes of sinners. But in the name of Father all these perfections of the Deity are collectively understood, as centered in the same person, as moving in the most perfect harmony, as being in fact the same simple essence displaying itself
several

several ways, and demanding of us several affections.

Humility and reverence are expressions of respect, which all good children pay to their earthly parents, and which, if they are sincere when they call God Father, they must in a much greater degree pay to him. His adorable Majesty, his incomprehensible Greatness, and Almighty Power, demand this of us. There is nothing which more powerfully works upon us to love any person, than his having conferred favours on us, and given us expressions of his good will and affection; and the greater his good will appears to be, the greater the favours are which we receive, the greater in proportion should our love be to him. Now, as there is no person who hath conferred upon us, in any comparison, so great benefits as God, so there is no

name so proper to remind us of them, as this of Father, which presents him to our thoughts at once as our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer, as regenerating us by his holy Spirit, and adopting us in his blessed Son; and consequently no name is so proper to excite in us that ardent love and affection which God requires.

Upon coming into the presence of a God, who declares himself of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, sinners should naturally tremble and despair; but the name of Father conveys to us so tender an idea, as calms our terrors, and inspires hope and confidence, teaching us, that if our Fathers, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto their children, how much more shall our Father which is in Heaven, give to those who call upon him? But notwithstanding the name of Father gives us so favourable

an idea, yet there is in it sufficient awe and dignity to excite and claim our obedience. Parents after the flesh love their children, listen to their petitions, forgive their faults, and relieve their wants; but parents after the flesh expect also to be obeyed; and so does God; we have no title to his mercy till we endeavour, by a sincere, though imperfect, obedience, to satisfy his Justice.

When we ask any favours of our acquaintance, and meet with a denial, we are apt to harbour a resentment against them, and to impute their refusal to indifference, pride, ill-nature, or such like motives; but when our parents deny our requests we feel no such resentments, we are well satisfied of their love, and repute even their denial an argument of it. Thus, when we offer up our prayers to God, we are, by making use of the name of Father,

taught the most profound submission and resignation, committing the success of our prayers entirely to his pleasure, and determining to look on the afflictions which he lays on us as Fatherly corrections, and on the things which he withholds from us, as such which it is more our interest to want than to obtain. Thus we see, that the reason why we are taught in our prayers to make use of the name of Father, rather than any other, is, because that name is more proper than any other to set before us the mercies we have received, and inspire us with such affections, as ought to sanctify our prayers.

The next thing in course is to enquire, Why we are taught in our prayers to say *our*, and not *my* Father.

We

We are the children of God only in an improper sense, and as the phrase of generation is applied unto several acts of the same nature with, or is attended with the same consequences as generation in its proper sense. But Christ is truly and properly the Son of God, by a true and proper generation; we are sons in such a manner as to have our sonship in common with others, so that any other part of the creation may join with us in calling upon God as a Father; and therefore we say *our* Father. Christ is a Son in such a manner, that no one can call God Father in the same sense which he does; and therefore *my* Father, seems an expression which, though not improper in our mouths, is yet most proper in his.

In Scripture our Lord seems designedly industrious to distinguish between our Son-

ship and his own, never in his discourses of *his* relation to God, saying, *our*, but *my* Father; never, in his discourses of *our* relation to God, saying *our*, but *your* Father, unless in this prayer; where we are to be supposed as the speakers, exclusive of him; so that this difference of expression seems to be a distinction between the true, proper, and eternal generation of the Son of God, and the improper generation of the creature born in time.

In regard to practice, we are taught to say *our* and not *my* Father, to inculcate the duty of an universal love and charity to all mankind, and that it is incumbent on us to extend our prayers to all persons whatsoever, praying not only for our relations and friends, but also for our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, that it may please God to forgive them, and to turn their hearts.

We

We are all the children of the same Father, we have all one Creator and Preserver, and ought therefore to exercise an universal charity, in imitation of God's universal Providence, who causeth the sun to rise, and the rain to descend both upon the just and the unjust. But a more particular love is due to our fellow Christians; for these we ought to pray with the greatest zeal, with these we ought to live in the most perfect harmony, and as we are the children of one Father, namely, God, and the members of one Body, namely, Christ, so ought we to have but one heart, and one mind.

On the whole therefore, if when we say *our* Father, our hearts are filled with humility and reverence, with love and confidence, with submission and obedience, with charity and benevolence, we may with good reason conclude that we are properly qualified

lified to repeat these words, that we are indeed God's Children, and he our Father. But on the contrary, if our hearts are puffed up with pride and haughtiness, sunk into indifference, or overcome with distrust, if there lurk in us any seeds of discontent and disobedience to God, of envy, hatred, malice, or uncharitableness to man, this name will but aggravate our guilt, and increase our condemnation, in that so great mercies vouchsafed to us by God, and presented to our thoughts by the name of Father, have had no greater effect on us, nor been sufficient to root out those passions, which are directly repugnant to his nature. To come into God's presence with the name of Father in our mouths, unless we have the affections flowing from it ever warm at our hearts, and influencing our lives, is a piece of hypocrisy which cannot lye hid from God's infinite knowledge, nor
escape

escape his perfect justice. The mention of this name, at the same time it reminds us of what God has done for us, should remind us of what we ought, in obedience to him, to do for ourselves; and then only can we properly call God our Father, when we sincerely endeavour to approve ourselves his children.

The next part of this divine prayer which comes under consideration, presents God to our minds as being in Heaven.

These words, which art in Heaven, are not designed to limit or confine the divine nature, to say here it is, and there it is not, but to breed in us a due apprehension and esteem of God's Majesty.

In regard of his natural or essential presence, he fills all his works, and is present
with

with the whole creation; he knoweth our down-sitting and our up-rising, he understandeth our thoughts long before, he is about our path and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways; if we climb up into Heaven, he is there, if we go down to hell, he is there also; no time or place, no action, word, or thought, are so secret as to exclude him; the inmost recesses of the heart lye open to his view, and by the necessary perfection of his nature he is intimately present with the minutest particle of his works.

In regard of his gracious presence, God is said to be present with good men, to dwell in their hearts, and to take up his residence with them that are of an humble and contrite spirit; in regard of this, he draws near to us when we do any thing to
please

please him, and departs from us when we offend him.

In regard of his Majestick presence, which we are to understand in the words under consideration, he is said to be in Heaven, because he there affords brighter manifestations of his glory; he from thence issues out the decrees of his Providence, and lays open the purpose and design of his dispensations; he there shines forth in that fullness of majesty, in that brightness of perfection, which we can but faintly imagine here, and the admiration of which will be part of our happy employment hereafter.

It remains for us to enquire, lastly, For what purposes we are taught in our prayers to make mention of our Father's being in Heaven. These are to breed in us a proper

per notion of his all-perfect nature, to teach us that his ways are above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts as far as is the Heaven above the earth, to give us awful apprehensions of that Being whose throne is in Heaven, and the earth is his footstool; to deter us from measuring the arm of Omnipotence by that of humanity, to compare the eternal God by mortal man, to instruct us always to bear in mind the vast difference between our earthly parents, and our Father which is in Heaven. This part of the prayer is most admirably calculated to inspire us with the most hearty and unfeigned sincerity, with the most full and absolute reliance on God, with the most thorough contempt of this, and ardent expectation of another life.

One man cannot look into the heart of another, but must be contented to judge
by

by appearances; so that a well conducted hypocrisy may gain a child as great advantages from an earthly parent, as the most unfeigned sincerity. But our Father which is in Heaven cannot be so deceived, for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.

Our earthly parents are so unstable in their affections, so weak in their understanding, so contracted in their abilities, so short in their duration, that no certain dependance is to be had on them; but our Father which is in Heaven, is in his love and goodness fixt and immutable, in knowledge infinite, in power almighty, in duration eternal, so that on him, and him only we can place a solid and reasonable confidence.

There

There is nothing more proper than the consideration of our Father's being in Heaven to wean our affections from this world, and make us gasp after the next; it reminds us of the shortness and uncertainty of earthly things, where we have no continuing city, and that an inheritance is to be fought by us in Heaven; for our Father is in Heaven, and where he is there should we desire to be also.

I shall conclude this discourse with summing up the full sense of the words we have been considering, according to the explication given of them, and which, by way of Paraphrase, may run thus:

O, thou great and gracious Being, who
hast purchased to thyself the name of
Father of all men and things by Creation
and Preservation, of all men in general by
Redemption,

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Redemption, and of all Christians in particular by Regeneration and Adoption, who hast all the perfections which an earthly parent can have in an infinite degree, and art entirely free from all their blemishes, who, in respect of the diffusion of thy presence art every where, in respect of the operations of thy grace dost dwell in good men, and in respect of the manifestation of thy Majesty art said to be in Heaven, we come before Thee, as commanded by thy blessed Son, to petition for the relief of our wants, and the pardon of our sins, bringing with us those affections which the consideration of a Father, and of a Father which is in Heaven, ought to breed in the breasts of his children. When we consider thy infinite Majesty, Power, and Justice, we are struck with the most pious humility, reverence, and fear, are actuated with the most firm resolutions of obedience;

when we contemplate thy goodness, wisdom, and knowledge, we feel the most exalted sentiments of love and gratitude, submission and resignation, confidence and sincerity; when we reflect on thy example we are inspired with an universal love and charity for all men; when we consider that the Heavens are thy habitation, we look with indifference on things of this life, and desire to enjoy complete happiness with thee in Heaven; and in order to ensure ourselves a place there, we make these affections the ruling principles of our lives and conversations; we always set thy example before our eyes, and make, as children ought, the imitation of our Father's perfections the chief study of our thoughts, the chief purport of our words, the chief business of our actions, the chief happiness of our lives.

Now to God the Father, &c.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N IV.

MATTHEW vi. 9th.

Hallowed be thy Name.

OUR Saviour having directed his disciples to whom they were to offer their prayers, and by what name more especially they should approach him, proceeds to direct them likewise for what things they should pray to him, and in what order their petitions should be presented, beginning with "Hallowed be thy Name." A petition which, as it naturally arises out of the words which went before, so doth it very properly precede and obtain the preference over all that follow after.

When we receive any great and material obligations from Man, when we are unexpectedly relieved from any great distress, or delivered from any impending danger, the first motion of the soul is all hurry and confusion, a mixture of pain and pleasure rather to be felt than described. But when these first transports are over, when Reason resumes her seat, and Reflexion succeeds, the first enquiry of a grateful soul is this: I have received an obligation, how shall I return it? If that appears impossible, all that a generous benefactor will require, all that a grateful soul can do, and more than she can sometimes express, is to acknowledge her obligations, and to say, I thank thee.

Thus it is between us and God: when we have thoroughly weighed and examined the great and material benefits conferred
on

on us by God, and strongly conveyed to our minds, by the name of Father, when we view him at once as creating us out of the dust of the earth, as preserving that being which he gave, and safely conducting us through all the storms of life, as redeeming us from the claim of Hell, regenerating us by his blessed Spirit, and adopting us in his blessed Son, all is joy, all is wonder, expressing itself in the words of the Psalmist, Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the Son of man, that thou regardest him? Upon cooler recollection, gratitude induces us to think of making some return, and to cry out, What reward shall I give unto the Lord for all the benefits he hath done unto me? What reward shalt thou give unto him indeed! Thy intentions are good, but never to be executed. The mercies of God are as much above any returns of thine, as they

are above thy deserts. Thy Wealth is Poverty, thy Power Weakness, and thy Wisdom Folly in the sight of God. Prudently then, and piously, content thyself with acknowledging his goodness, and setting his mercies ever before thine eyes, with saying, in the lively and grateful eloquence of the Psalmist, Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise his holy name; Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; O God, our God, our Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy Name.

The order in which this petition stands doth very properly point out to us what all of us must know, and yet many of us are very apt, and too willing to forget, that the glory of God ought to be the great and chief pursuit of man. It is apparent, that whatsoever hath a right to our first consideration

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deration in our prayers, should have the same preference in our lives and conversations. Man may indeed, and too often doth divert and amuse himself with vain and idle pursuits, with worshipping idols of his own creation, and following phantoms which he himself hath formed, but he can have no solid and rational views, which have not a regard to, and do not ultimately terminate in, the glory of God; that most noble and lively principle, that most worthy and happy end of all his actions.

The design of God in the creation of the world was the glory of the Creator, and the good of the Creature; and then only doth the Creature attain to the utmost perfection of his nature, when both these ends are happily answered. But the misfortune is, that these things, which in the

design of the Deity, and in the nature of things, are strictly and inseparably connected and united, become divided by the folly and corruption of man, and are considered as incompatible, as two distinct and opposite pursuits, of which both are not attainable; and it is plain to be seen by the practice of the world, how much weight the glory of God will have with us, and how far it will influence our actions, when once it comes to be considered as inconsistent with, and opposite to, what we imagine to be our happiness.

The greater part of mankind calling inclination reason, and corruption happiness, direct their course to some distant goal, where imaginary happiness takes up her abode; whilst the wiser and the happier few pursue the road which leads to the glory of God, and to the only true, solid,
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and lasting happiness of man. Our wise Creator, well acquainted with the nature of the Creature which he had made, contrived to implant in us a principle more quick and powerful to advance his glory than gratitude itself, when he made the same means which conduced to his glory, necessary to our own happiness; and that man who leads a religious and Christian life, doth at the same time give glory to God, which is the one end of his creation, and procure happiness to himself, which is the other.

Thus much observed in general, I proceed more particularly, to consider the petition before us, and shall shew,

First, What we are to understand by God's Name. And,

Secondly,

Secondly, How we are to Hallow it.

By the Name of God we are to understand, in the first and most important sense of the word, his all-perfect nature. Names are imposed on things to distinguish them from each other, by conveying to us as clear an apprehension as possible of their nature. But God is a Being so infinitely transcendent above all other, that no one name can give us any adequate conception of him, and the whole force of words is insufficient to set before us God in that fullness of glory which dwells essentially in him. To raise our thoughts, however, as near as possible to the Deity, he is in Scripture set forth to us under several titles, expressive of the several ways in which his all-perfect nature displays itself to man. Could any one word convey to us a proper notion of God's nature, that would be his name ;

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name; but as this is impossible, we must by his name necessarily understand whatever perfections we know to be essential to him, whether manifested in his works, or revealed to us in his word, under how many different titles soever.

By the name of God in a secondary sense, we are to understand whatever hath an immediate relation to him; as the times and places set apart for his service, those holy writings in which are contained the revelations of his will; the persons appointed to minister in his service, and the revenues allotted for their maintenance.

To hallow the name of God, in which soever of these senses we take it, cannot signify to confer any holiness upon it. In holiness, as in his other adorable perfections, God is infinite; nor is it in our
power

power to diminish therefrom, or make any addition thereto; and those things which bear some peculiar relation to God, are holy merely upon that account, and not according to the opinion which men may have, or the uses they may make of them. It is not therefore for his own sake, or any advantage, any fresh increase of glory and holiness accruing thereby to *him*, that God hath made the hallowing his name our duty, but for a proof of our love, gratitude, and obedience, and as a necessary qualification to prepare us for being subjects of his kingdom. When therefore, we entertain high and worthy notions of God's nature; when we acknowledge his infinite perfections, and act agreeably to such acknowledgments, viewing and adoring at a distance his natural attributes, approaching to and imitating his moral, when we keep our mouths from profane cursing and swearing,

swearing, and never mention the name of the high and holy One but with awe and reverence, piety and devotion; when we make God's glory the first principle, the chief end of all our thoughts, words, and actions, and let the desire of hallowing his holy name stand foremost in our hearts, as it doth in the petitions of this prayer; then do we hallow as we ought the name of God, as it signifies his nature.

When we esteem those things which bear any relation to God according to the dignity of him to whom they belong, and apply them to the purposes for which they were designed, when we rightly consider them as appointed by God to receive part of that reverence which we owe to him, and which he looks upon as paid to himself, when we hallow the times and places set apart for his service by a constant attendance

tendance and devout behaviour; the Scriptures, by defending them on all occasions against the cavils and objections of infidels or evil-minded brethren, by esteeming them the word of God containing all things necessary to salvation, by diligently and devoutly reading and meditating on them, and by giving them all honour in our conversation, forbearing to make a jest of them, which is the practice of unbelievers, or to take a jest out of them, which is the practice of many who gratify what they call wit at the expence of decency and religion, when we hallow the persons appointed to minister in his service by a proper regard of their function, a due attention to their instructions, and a practical observance of them, and their revenues by a cheerful and punctual payment of them whenever they are due, we do then hallow as we ought
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the name of God, according to the secondary explication here given of it.

Was it in our power to make any addition to the Holiness of God's Nature, or to add to his essential Glory in any respect whatsoever, certainly in point of gratitude we ought to do it, nay should be exceeding glad that we are able to make some return for the mercies we have received at his hands. As there is no pleasure which is more sincere, no virtue which conveys greater delight along with it than the returning of obligations, unless it is the conferring them, what a delightful piece of service must it be to a generous soul to indulge her gratitude to God, and in some measure acquit herself of her obligations, by hallowing his name. The satisfaction arising herefrom would be cheaply bought, though the performance was laborious

laborious and difficult; and the delight resulting from the action, when accomplished, would amply overpay all the labour undergone in the accomplishment of it.

Supposing then, that to hallow God's name was a laborious task, whereas it is most easy and pleasant, and that it was profitable to God, but not in the least to ourselves, gratitude should even then be sufficient to induce us to perform it. Our sincere hallowing of God's name doth not render him one whit more holy, who is in himself holy above all that is called holy; doth not render him in the least more glorious, who is in himself great above all glory; our becoming faithful subjects of his kingdom doth not at all encrease his dominion, who in the right of his own essential perfections ruleth over all; nor our zealous performance

performance of, and submission to, his will, make any addition to his authority who doeth whatsoever he will in Heaven and in earth. It is for our own sakes therefore that we are taught thus to pray, and required thus to act; that by so doing we may render ourselves proper objects of God's goodness, and partake of the blessed effects of his beneficence.

Notwithstanding all this, how few are there, if we look into the world, who are worthy repeaters of this petition, who hallow the name of God as they ought. Some, and those not a few in this right honourable age of infidelity, wholly deny the Being of a God; others allow him indeed a bare existence, but impiously strip him of his attributes, and deny his Providence; whilst many who profess the Christian faith, and call themselves the

children of God, dishonour him by their wicked and profligate life, and bring into contempt, and cause to be evil spoken of, that holy name whereby they are called.

Never did greater levity appear than in the present age. All things serious, solemn, and sacred are wantonly thrown by, or treated only as proper subjects of ridicule; and the religion of Christ, which ought to warm the hearts and influence the practice of its professors, is no more than skin-deep; it is made a plausible pretence to serve a turn, and is put off and on as easily as our cloaths. How thin is the church, how almost desolate is the altar of God? What wonder? since a party of pleasure, the dropping in of a friend, a too luxurious meal, and indolence of disposition, in a word, any thing or nothing, is deemed a sufficient excuse for our staying from church,

church, and neglecting the publick worship of our Maker.

The Scriptures, those lively oracles of God, wherein is contained our title to eternal salvation, which it is every man's duty and happiness to be acquainted with, how shamefully, how foolishly, how impiously, are they neglected? I doubt, though I am afraid it doth not admit of a doubt, whether any book is so little known as that which deserves and demands our strictest attention. The Poor think themselves absolved from consulting it because so much of their time is taken up by their necessary labour; and the Rich no doubt must be excused, some because they never read at all, and others because their meditations are turned another way, and they are better employed in perusing and raising trophies to more modern Productions, where inde-

cency passes off for wit, and infidelity for reason.

Answerable to and worthy of these most excellent private studies, is the polite Conversation of the present age, where Noise is Mirth, Obscenity Good-humour, and Profaneness Wit. Decency and Good sense, which were formerly deemed necessary to give a grace to and season Conversation, to join Pleasure and Improvement together, are become mere antiquated notions, words without meaning; and all that the pert and polite sinner need to do now to establish his reputation of wit, and be deemed the hero of all polite Assemblies, is to get rid of Religion as soon as possible, to set Conscience at defiance, to deny the Being or Providence of God, to laugh at the Scriptures, deride God's Ordinances, profane his name, and rally his Ministry. Thus
qualified,

qualified, the world is his own, he carries all before him, and if he should meet with opposition from some sincere Christian who is truly Religious, and cannot brook to hear the name of his Maker treated with contempt, why he despises and derides the poor superstitious Fool, and superlatively happy in himself laughs at the Argument which he cannot answer.

Much were it to be wished that the Character here drawn was imaginary, or at least uncommon, but I am afraid the experience of all present will assure them it is too real, too frequent.

I shall dismiss my Consideration of this petition by seriously exhorting every Good Christian to extend his regards to his fellow-creatures, to endeavour to propagate a due veneration of God's holy Name, not

only by the goodness of his life, and the sincerity of his Prayers, but also by giving his advice, and exerting his authority. It is naturally implied in the words of this petition, that we hallow God's name ourselves, and promote it in others, as much as lies in our power; and if we are deficient as to ourselves, or negligent as to others, every time we repeat this petition, we incur the censure and punishment due to hypocrisy.

There are it is to be feared, many well-meaning and sincere Christians, who thro' fear of laughter, imputation of singularity, and censure of hypocrisy, forbear to rebuke and express their dislike to those many ways, by which God's name is dishonoured in most conversations. But surely if it is becoming, if it is the duty of a man to vindicate the character of his friend, still more becoming, still

still more the duty must it be of every Christian to defend the honour of his God; especially as those who profane it will be apt to construe silence into approbation, and think those secretly for them, who are not openly against them. Now that religion is at so low an ebb, every disciple of Christ, who hath at heart the honour of his Master, ought to display the banners of Christianity abroad, to declare open war against wickedness and vice, to consider himself as accountable to God for his backwardness in rebuking his profest enemies, and to look upon himself as a light which is to give light to all that are in the house, and in consequence of such considerations, to let his light so shine before men, that they may see his good works, and glorify his Father which is in Heaven.

Now to God the Father, &c.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N V.

MATTHEW vi. 10th.

Thy Kingdom come,

WERE we but once thoroughly convinced of the existence of a God, and of the great benefits which we have received at his hands, did we but consider, know, and acknowledge him to be our Father which is in Heaven, and suffer such considerations to have their due weight and proper effect upon us, to incline us to reverence his name, and render it holy and respectable among men, the next step would be our repeating as we ought, this petition.

Thy

Thy Kingdom come. The great and material advantages of being under the immediate inspection and government of an all-wise, powerful, just and gracious King, are so evident, that nothing but a degenerate and corrupted nature, nothing but a partial understanding blindly submitting to the irregular dictates of a perverse will could prevent our seeing, acknowledging, pursuing, and praying for them. Most men, however, thus biaſſed from their natural rectitude, set up the throne of extravagant passions in their hearts, instead of chearfully and joyfully submitting to the ſcepter of God; like the rebellious Jews, crying out for a King, when indeed the Lord their God was their King.

As this ariſes in a great meaſure from a total ignorance of the nature of the Kingdom here prayed for, I ſhall ſhew what

we

we are to understand here by the Kingdom of God, and what we mean by the coming of that Kingdom; concluding with mentioning those affections with which this petition ought always to be attended.

The Kingdom of God in Scripture is taken in several senses. Sometimes it means his natural or providential Kingdom, or that universal dominion which he exercises over all things, and which is the necessary result of his all-perfect nature.

In this sense holy David declares, thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the Heaven, and in the Earth, is thine; thine is the Kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all.

Sometimes

Sometimes it means the Kingdom of grace, or the dispensation of the Messiah.

This is called the Kingdom of God, because though he doth not set up an outward and visible government, as in the Mosaick dispensation, yet he rules inwardly in the hearts and minds of those who are entered into the Gospel Covenant. This is the most common acceptation of the phrase in the New Testament. But it sometimes signifies also the Kingdom of God's Glory, or that happy state into which at the day of Judgment, he shall receive, and in which he shall govern his saints for ever.

Of this Kingdom our Saviour speaks, saying, then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world.

Having

Having thus seen in what general acceptations the Kingdom of God is taken in Scripture, let us next consider in which of these it is to be understood in this petition.

As to the providential Kingdom of God, it is founded upon the perfection of his nature; and as that perfection is unalterably the same, so must the dominion resulting from it be unalterable likewise, capable neither of addition or diminution; and therefore we cannot here have any respect to that kingdom.

The kingdom of Grace is capable of increase, both by the coming in of those who do not now believe, and by such a blessed alteration in those who do, that they may walk according to their profession.

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The kingdom of Glory is capable of increase; both by receiving those who do now, and shall hereafter lead a godly life in the state of grace, and by admitting those who are already departed out of this life in the fear of God, to a greater share of Glory, than they at present enjoy. In this petition therefore we have regard to these two kingdoms of grace and glory.

Though the kingdom of Grace is in fact but an introduction to that of Glory, and the kingdom of Glory the highest dispensation of God's grace, yet are they in some things different both as to the manner of the administration, and the condition of the subjects.

In the kingdom of Grace we are in a state of tryal, liable to be drawn away by the deceit of the world, the flesh, and the Devil,

Devil, liable to pain and sorrow, to the fears of losing what few comforts we enjoy, and to the troublesome certainty of leaving them if they leave not us; in the kingdom of Glory we are in a state of secure and perfect felicity, our crown is fixt upon our heads too firm to be shaken, the flowers which bloom therein shall always continue fresh; Sin shall be disarmed of her sting, and Death be swallowed up in Victory.

In the kingdom of Grace, the good and the bad are mixed together, rewards and punishments are unequally distributed, and the worldly condition of the greatest sinner is preferable to that of the most righteous man on earth; but in the kingdom of Glory the good shall be separated from the bad; those who have been faithful servants of their Lord shall be distinguished from
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the wicked and rebellious; the glorified Saint shall no longer be the companion of the incorrigible Sinner; the latter shall be assigned over to everlasting punishment, and the former received into that glorious kingdom wherein is joy and peace for evermore.

In the kingdom of Grace, we walk by Faith, we see through a glass darkly, our understanding is clouded, our reason weak, and our will perverse; we are scarce able to comprehend the most obvious things, and the ways of God, and the dispensations of his Providence, are far above out of our sight; but in the kingdom of Glory we shall see face to face, we shall know even as we are known, all nature will be laid open to our view, and the God of Nature himself be fully manifested to us. The ways of Providence, which in many re-
spects

spects appear to us dark, mysterious, and unintelligible, shall be then cleared up, the cloud which sits upon them at present will be totally dispelled, and they will appear to us just and uniform, worthy of the fountain of light from whence they issued. The Nature of God, which in our present state we can have no adequate notion of, will then break forth upon us in its fullest tide of Glory, and these weak and frail bodies will be so much strengthened as to be able to see God and live; and our souls be so far exalted above their present state in knowledge, as to be able fully to comprehend, in purity, as to be able perfectly to enjoy the glorious object.

In the kingdom of Grace, upon account of our many sins, and the utter impossibility of our making peace with God of ourselves, we are governed by our Mediator

Jesus

Jesus Christ; through the consideration of whose meritorious sufferings and effectual intercession, God overlooks our frailties, pardons our sins, and accepts of a sincere repentance instead of a perfect obedience. But in the kingdom of Glory, when we shall no more be liable to temptation and sin, when our corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and we bear the image of the heavenly, as we have borne the image of the earthly, there will be no occasion for a mediator, but we shall be governed immediately by God himself; the mediatorial office of Christ shall then cease, and the kingdom be delivered up to God even the Father, and the Son also himself shall be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

It remains for us to consider, in what sense we pray that these kingdoms of God may come.

For the kingdom of Grace we pray, that our hearts and minds may be thoroughly subdued thereto, that we may be worthy subjects of Christ's kingdom; that all persons who are within the Christian covenant may lead their lives answerable thereto, and every member of Christ's holy church may in his vocation truly and godly serve him; that God would please to have mercy upon all Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Hereticks, and take from them all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of his word and commandment, and so fetch them home to his flock, that they may be saved among the remnant of the true Israelites, and be made one Fold under one Shepherd Jesus Christ our Lord.

For the kingdom of Glory we pray, that God will of his mercy speedily release us from the dangers and troubles of this life, and instate us with himself in joy and
peace,

peace, that he will shortly accomplish the number of his elect, and receive his blessed Saints into everlasting happiness.

To make us worthy repeaters of this petition, it is necessary that we should have a due sense of God's goodness in establishing a kingdom amongst us, which is founded upon such mild and easy conditions as that of Grace, and strengthened with such great and glorious promises as that of Glory; we should acknowledge the great privilege of being under his government, whose every action is dictated by infinite mercy, and guided by unerring wisdom for the benefit of his creatures; we should entertain all those affections for God which good subjects have for their kings, and perform all those duties which they pay to them in as much greater a degree, as God is superior to the greatest

Monarch. We ought also, in using this petition, to have an universal love and charity for all men, a due sense of the corruption of manners, of the prevalence of infidelity and vice, an holy sorrow for all who knowing the truth live not up to it, and for all who know it not, but walk in ignorance and in the shadow of death. And these charitable affections should upon all occasions break forth into action, inspiring us with a sincere zeal to instruct the ignorant and reclaim the wicked,

A glorious employment this for a reasonable creature, and a necessary qualification to make us true subjects of that kingdom which was founded and is governed by Christ, who spent his whole life in doing good, in converting the Sinner from the evil of his ways, and bringing him to the knowledge of God. Christianity was never intended

intended to be kept in a corner, or confined, like the doctrines of the philosophers, to any particular school, but to spread itself over the face of the whole earth. No one therefore can be a worthy subject of Christ's kingdom, who does not endeavour to advance and propagate it.

It is not to be expected that we should, like the Apostles, visit remote and barbarous nations, since we have not, as they had, the credentials of Miracles to produce; but surely it is our indispensable duty to plant and propagate the Christian religion in our own colonies, and as we reap their temporal things, to which we have I know not what right, to sow in them spiritual things, to which our religion entitles them, without any other consideration. Had we been more careful to perform our parts in this respect, had we

endeavoured to civilize those rude nations, and instil into them the principles of the Gospel, we had not so often lamented their virulent cruelty and repeated perfidies. Of late years indeed there has been established among us a most excellent charity for propagating the Gospel into foreign parts, and if the success has not as yet answered our wishes, it has been sufficient to quicken our endeavours.

It is evident from Scripture, that before the consummation of all things Christ's kingdom shall be universal, that the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea, that the kingdom shall be the Lord's, and he shall govern the nations. It is our duty therefore to advance and hasten, to the utmost of our power, this happy æra, by approving ourselves true subjects of Christ, and striving

ing to erect his throne in the hearts of others; by endeavouring ourselves to promote Christian knowledge at home, and encouraging those who strive to propagate it abroad, administering such means to them as may render their labours easy, and pave the way for their success, so that the word of God, and the kingdom of his Christ, may grow mightily and prevail.

It is our interest, as well as duty, to pray for the coming of Christ's kingdom, both in regard of the happy consequences attending his universal dominion in the state of Grace, and our speedier admission into that of Glory. Universal Happiness must be the result of universal Christianity, and the world shall enjoy uninterrupted peace, when that religion which forbids all the motives to war, is sincerely professed by all; the wolf shall dwell with

the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid, and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. All racking and malevolent passions shall then be extinguished, all base and dishonest actions shall then cease, and true religion shall sanctify the hearts, preside over the actions, and bless the lives of all men.

Thus universally happy, thus universally good shall the state of Grace be, when the fullness of the Gentiles come in, and the remnant of Israel is gathered together; and as the time of this great reformation is uncertain, as it may be even now at our doors, how much is it our duty, how much is it our interest to contribute every one of us his mite towards the hastening of this happy period:

And

And do thou, O God, who seest how low religion is sunk, both in our minds and practice, be pleased to impart to us and to all people, such portions of thy grace as may purify our hearts, and amend our lives; as may incite us to the conversion of others, as well as the reformation of ourselves; quicken our endeavours to this good work, assist our infirmities, and in thy good time crown us with success, and bring all mankind under the dominion of thy blessed son; and when this happy time is arrived, then be thou pleased, of thy gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect, and to hasten thy kingdom of Glory, that we, with all those that are departed in the true faith of thy holy name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in thy eternal and everlasting glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom,

whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, &c. &c.

SERMON

S E R M O N VI.

MATTHEW vi. 10th.

*Thy Will be done in Earth, as it is in
Heaven.*

THIS is the last of those petitions which relate immediately to God, and is the best proof we can give of our being sincere in the foregoing.

The will of God may be understood either of those laws which he has given us for the direction of our lives, or of those dispensations which in the course of them he is pleased to lay on us.

In

In the first of these senses our sincere Obedience, in the last our chearful Submission is required. Both these duties I shall consider in my present discourse, subjoining such considerations as are proper to enforce them.

And first, Of obedience to the will of God, as it means the observation of those laws which he has given us for the direction of our lives.

These laws are contained in the holy scriptures; and as it is necessary that we should know the good, perfect, and acceptable will of God, before it is possible that we can do it, it is our duty to make ourselves thoroughly acquainted with these books, that we may have a competent knowledge of those laws which are to be the standard of all our actions. In order

to acquire this, we should be diligent in reading them ourselves, and attentive to such expositions as are delivered by others, for the more full and clearer illustration of them. Half the time which many of us bestow upon reading Novels and Romances, would [make us masters of those books wherein is contained our title to eternal salvation,

One would imagine that a church like our's, wherein the Scriptures are publicly read in the vulgar tongue, and the duty of private reading and meditating on them is recommended, would abound with knowledge and understanding, even amongst her poorer members; whereas on the contrary, many, even in considerable stations, are so grossly ignorant of them as can scarce be credited. For the knowledge of God's laws is not only easy to be acquired, but
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it is absolutely necessary for us to be acquainted with them, as without knowing we cannot obey them, without obeying them we cannot obtain everlasting salvation. Let every person therefore make it his business to search the Scriptures, to breed up his children in the knowledge of them, and to let their studies of things divine go hand in hand with their pursuits after human knowledge; so that we may every one of us attentively hear, constantly read, seriously mark, piously learn, and profitably digest those laws which God hath given us for the direction of our lives. The next thing to which is, that we act agreeably to that knowledge; if we know the will of God, happy are we if we do it.

The Obedience of the Angels is proposed to us by Christ as a pattern for our own,
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thy will be done in earth as it is in Heaven. Not that our blessed Lord, who knew the disparity between them and us, and the many disadvantages which we labour under, that they are totally exempted from, demands from us that perfect performance of his will which they pay to him, and which we in our present state are incapable of discharging. Great is the disproportion between a glorified Spirit, free from the clog of flesh, free from all temptations, blest with an unfullied clearness and rectitude of will, and a poor mortal creature, incumbered with a load of matter, surrounded with temptations, corrupt in his very nature, weak in his understanding, and in his will perverse. Great therefore must be the disproportion in the services which they pay to their Creator, in the purity and perfection of their obedience. But though we cannot equal these celestial beings,

beings, we may imitate them; though we cannot arrive at the excellency of their natures, we may by aiming at it arrive at the summit of our own. Sincerity and Universality, Zeal and Alacrity, Diligence and Perseverance, conspicuous and inseparable qualifications of their Obedience, may become ingredients of our own, though not in the same perfect degree; and every virtue which they in the excellency of the Angelick nature possess unfullied, we in the infirmities of the human may imperfectly imitate; and imitation is the thing proposed here, a practising of the same virtues, though not in the same degree. A perfect and unfinning Obedience is not required of us, but a sincere and universal one is; which if we perform, the many acts of disobedience which we commit through surprize, ignorance, and infirmity, nay, through wilfulness itself, will upon a sincere

sincere repentance be graciously pardoned by God, for his sake who died for all men, and lives to make intercession for all those who do their best to approve themselves his disciples.

Having thus seen in what latitude our Obedience is expected, and in what manner God's will may be done in earth as it is in Heaven, I shall now endeavour to enforce the practice of this Obedience to God's laws by some suitable considerations. The first of which is,

That, He, who made and delivered them to us, is a Being who has an indisputable authority to appoint laws, and infinite power to punish those who violate them. The best rules of action, unless enacted and enforced by proper authority, are weak and useless, insufficient to repress

vice, and maintain virtue. Look into the schools of the antient philosophers, and you will find that their many excellent natural precepts were confined within very narrow limits, and had little or no influence, being generally more admired than practised, even by their own scholars. Reason was and ever will be too weak to combat with inclination, and Virtue, left to herself, unable to make a stand against the corruptions of Vice. No law therefore can be expected to be duly observed, without an evident right of making it, a manifest ability of punishing those who break it, vested in the law-giver. Both of which most eminently concur in God; his right of giving laws to the Creatures whom he made is unquestionable, his power of punishing the disobedient is a necessary perfection of his nature; he is wise in heart, and mighty in strength; who hath
hardened

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hardened himself against him and prospered? And his intention to punish them, as it might be fully proved from that perfect Justice which is essential to him, Righteousness and Judgment are the habitation of his throne, so is it very plainly revealed in the same books wherein his laws are contained, that he will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity. All the motives therefore which serve to enforce our obedience to the laws of man, do most strongly conspire to bind on us Obedience to the laws of God.

Another motive to which duty is Gratitude, arising from a consideration of that person by whose mediation God gave these laws to us, namely, Jesus Christ. If we reflect seriously on the miserable condition from which Christ relieved us, and

the means of Grace and hopes of Glory he hath afforded us, if we consider the means by which he effected this, how for our sakes he was incarnate, led a mean and inglorious life, and died a painful and ignominious death, we cannot acquit ourselves of the basest ingratitude, if we trample on his authority, and refuse Obedience to his laws. Generous tempers are willing, in many things, to bear with and oblige those persons who have conferred favours on them, even in hard and unreasonable requests. As the obligations therefore which Christ has laid on us, are infinitely above any which man can confer, so ought our gratitude to rise in proportion, and exert itself in a steady Obedience, even if his laws were heavy and grievous to be borne; whereas on the contrary, his yoke is easy, and his burthen is light. And this supplies us with another motive, drawn
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from the consideration of the laws themselves.

The Gospel laws, if fairly and impartially considered, are undoubtedly the most excellent in the world. God does not rule us in an arbitrary manner, and impose laws merely to demonstrate his authority, but governs us, as we are reasonable creatures, in a reasonable way. The laws which he has given us are adapted to the frame of our reason; and as creatures possessed of that faculty, we cannot help assenting to their equity, how much soever we may neglect the performance of them; they carry full authority and conviction along with them, they speak their original, and attest their author to be more than man.

Human laws are oftentimes perplexed and obscure, clashing and inconsistent not only

with reason, but with themselves, liable to be misconstrued, perverted, and abused; and the most equitable of them are in a state of uncertainty, and subject to be repealed; but the laws of the Gospel are free from all these imperfections; they are delivered in a clear, concise, and perspicuous manner, and as they were designed for the direction of the ignorant, as well as of the learned, they lie level to the meanest capacities, they are perfectly uniform, consistent, and harmonious, and the comments occasionally made on them by the Apostles serve to reflect fuller light on them, and render the most difficult passages plain and easy; they are light itself, and in them is no darkness at all.

They are also fixt and immutable, liable to no change, subject to no repeal. The varying of circumstances, the fallibility,
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shortsightedness, and want of integrity in human lawgivers, make it oftentimes necessary to vary their laws, but as God is free from all these blemishes, as there is in him no variableness nor shadow of turning, so in the Gospel laws which he has established, there are no mistakes, no infirmities to require an alteration; they are a full, perfect, and perpetual standard of all our actions, to which all nations should bow and obey.

To these excellencies let us also join the sublimity and usefulness of these laws. In three short chapters of the New Testament are contained more noble and sublime doctrines, than the whole body of heathen philosophy can supply us with; upon first sight indeed they appear so easy and familiar, that we may be induced to think,

that we ourselves could have been the authors of them; but upon enquiry we shall find, that the most acute and diligent spirits among the antients, after a whole life spent in the study of virtue, could, with all the advantages of human literature, produce nothing which deserved to be put in the scale against Christianity.

Philosophy, indeed, whatever figure it might make before Christ appeared in the world, and his laws were promulged, did upon that promulgation very sensibly decline, and must have entirely dropped to the ground long before it did, had not some professors of it, more artful than honest, transplanted many of the Christian precepts into their systems, and embellished them with virtues not their own.

To

To the foregoing motives to Obedience to the Gospel laws, let us lastly add, the usefulness of them.

They are calculated to promote at the same time our virtue and happiness, to make us at once better and happier men. They have a natural tendency to promote peace on earth and good will among men, as well as to advance the glory of God on high; they do not only pave our way to Heaven, but if religiously obeyed, will make our life here an Heaven upon earth.

On the whole, the Gospel laws are reasonable and just, clear and concise, consistent and uniform, fixt and immutable, sublime and useful; they are given by that God to whom our service is due, through the mediation of that Saviour to whom we have the greatest obligations, so that in
point

point of duty and reason, gratitude and interest, we are bound to perform a chearful, ready, and universal Obedience to the will of God, as it is manifested in those laws contained in the Gospel of his son. Notwithstanding which potent ties, we find it extremely difficult, and without the assistance of God's grace impossible, to keep ourselves from falling; and therefore we are taught by our Saviour to pray to God that his will may be done in earth as in Heaven, to make us sensible that without his grace we cannot so perform it, and even with it, in many things we offend all. How thankful therefore should we be to God, who has appointed a remedy for our weakness, and how joyful should we be to apply it, making up for the imperfection of our Obedience, by the sincerity of our Repentance. Such a course will not only greatly redound to our temporal peace, but
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is also the only means, through Christ's blood, to entitle us to eternal glory; and the only way to become sharers of the happiness of Angels in Heaven, is to be sincere though imperfect imitators of their Obedience in earth.

I proceed now to consider the other duty included in doing God's will, namely, a patient and chearful submission to whatever dispensations God is pleased, in the course of our lives, to lay upon us.

It is not in our power indeed to disappoint God's designs and reverse his decrees, but it is in our power, and too often in our practice, to murmur and repine at them. By Submission therefore we are to understand that virtue which enables us to appear, in all stations and under all circumstances, with an equal and resigned temper,

per, arising from a full conviction that whatever happens unto us is according to God's appointment, and that whatever he appoints is always best. This is the only solid foundation upon which our Submission can be built; and Submission is that duty which of all others conduces to our ease and quiet, which conducts us with a steady course through all the storms of life, which softens every sorrow, asswages every pain, and blunts the edge of the most severe misfortunes.

When we reflect on the sufferings of human nature in general, and those which we ourselves groan under in particular, the unequal distribution of them, so that the lives of some men glide on in serenity and peace, whilst others know nothing but misfortunes from the cradle to the grave, and that oftentimes the righteous suffer,
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and the wicked prosper, upon such reflections we are often tempted to call in question the Justice of God, and cavil at his dispensations; actuated by a principle of self-approbation, we are readier to condemn any thing than ourselves, to impute our sufferings to any rather than the true cause, to clear ourselves, and accuse God. A practice this as unreasonable as impious, greatly prejudicial to our own interests, and injurious to his honour; instead of removing it augments our sufferings, increases God's displeasure, and inspires all those uneasy passions, and produces those dishonest actions, which are the general consequences of a discontented mind. Submission on the contrary, such a Submission as giveth thanks in all things, has not only a tendency in itself to alleviate our griefs, but also to prevail on God to remove them.

However

However dark and mysterious, unintelligible and inconsistent the ways of Providence may appear, this patient and resigned temper receives and suffers all things without repining; and is firmly persuaded, that in a future state all which seems dark and mysterious in God's government shall be cleared up, all that seems unintelligible shall be thoroughly explained, and all which seems inconsistent shall be fully reconciled; so that however we may repine at our sufferings here, we shall see the justice and good tendency of them hereafter. It is indeed impossible for us to suffer and not to feel, what is required of us is to feel like men, and bear like Christians; neither are our endeavours to extricate ourselves, or our prayers that God would deliver us, any ways opposite to this duty, but are themselves duties which ought always to accompany our sufferings as we are reasonable

able creatures, and as we are Christians; only let us use no endeavours but such as are strictly just, no prayers but what are offered up with that resignation of which Christ has set us an example; we may beseech God, that the cup may pass from us, but always with this conclusion, not my will, O Lord, but thy will be done. This is a temper which every man ought always to carry about with him, and yet it is a point in which the very best of us are apt to fall short; I shall therefore conclude this discourse with subjoining some of the many motives which might be offered for the enforcement of this duty.

First, let us consider the person who brings these sufferings upon us; it is God; a Being of whose nature we can have no true notion, without acknowledging him
endued

endued with Almighty Power, perfect Goodness, and consummate Wisdom.

In consequence of the first of these attributes he rules and governs all things, brings to pass whatsoever he sees fit, and suffers no opposition nor controul, he is mighty in strength, who hath hardened himself against him and prospered? And if God, who brings these sufferings upon us, is of such infinite power, how imprudent is it in us to murmur and repine at what we can no ways prevent, how unsafe to provoke a power, which we are utterly incapable of resisting? This argument, however strong when applied to our weakness and necessity is, it must be confessed, but little calculated to engage and work upon the heart; it demands our submission through fear, but not through love;

love; it does not at all induce us to kiss the rod, and bless the hand which gives the blow. To the perfect goodness of God we must have recourse, before we can be thoroughly reconciled to, and satisfied with, our sufferings; we may see the necessity of them from his power, but are convinced of the usefulness and advantage of them by his goodness only. It is this attribute which gives us patience, resignation, and love, for it is this which teaches us that God cannot take delight in the miseries of his creatures, that he does not grieve us willingly, but in mercy, and that his dispensations, however severe they may fall, are indeed the result of an Almighty Power, but of an Almighty Power acting according to the dictates of perfect goodness, and under the direction of unerring wisdom. God is of infinite knowledge and wisdom, he perfectly understands the

nature of all things, with their qualities, powers, and circumstances; he thoroughly comprehends the respects and relations of things one to another, the fitness of such and such means to produce such and such ends, and therefore, as his goodness always inclines and his power always enables him to act for the good of his creatures, so his wisdom secures him from any error and misapplication.

These considerations must naturally tend to suppress our complaints and confirm our patience; for as God is of infinite wisdom, goodness, and power, nothing can cloud his understanding, nothing can pervert or resist his will; and therefore in this we may rest satisfied, that God always knows what is for our good, and is always willing and able to afford it to us; and
therefore

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therefore we may with the greatest security repose ourselves in him.

Another motive to submission arises from a consideration of ourselves.

We are God's creatures, and ought to be very thankful, that we are at all, and not to murmur that we are in no better condition. Shall the lump of Clay say to the Potter who fashioned it, why hast thou made me thus or thus? Our condition here was not designed to be completely happy, but to be intermixed with trials, and troubles; we are in a state of probation, not of felicity. Sufferings are the necessary lot of our nature; Our Saviour was made perfect by them; and as we ought to follow him in other respects, so must we expect to follow him in this also. Why should we repine then at the com-

mon burthen of our nature, why murmur at the just and salutary dispensations of Providence? especially considering that we are sinners, and as such, the very least of God's mercies is more than we deserve, the very severest of his inflictions is milder than our crimes in strict justice demand; why then doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?

Lastly, let us consider the nature of the sufferings themselves.

Great part of those afflictions which we place to God's account, ought in good reason to be placed to our own. How many are poor through extravagance or indolence, how many sick through debauchery and intemperance; and so with many other afflictions, which being withdrawn from those miseries we so much complain of,
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would reduce them more than at first view we could believe; and for those which remained, they would not appear so terrible as at present, if we would place the good which we undeservedly enjoy, against the ills which we deservedly feel; if we would consider how many persons were in a worse state, rather than cast up our eyes to those who are in a better; if we would reflect on the quick and sudden transitions which we see from affliction to comfort, even in those who seem the farthest gone in misery; and that even in the midst of our sufferings we may have the strong consolation of hope; we may bear the present in expectation of the future, and not unreasonably believe, that as we ebb with the one tide, we shall flow with the other. But supposing that our sufferings were as constant as they are severe, that they were as considerable in number as degree, and that

we were assured they would continue as long as our lives, yet even in this deplorable condition we may with pleasure reflect, that the man that is born of a woman is of few days, so that our misfortunes will soon have an end; we may triumphantly consider, that our momentary afflictions will work for us an eternal and far more exceeding weight of glory.

On the whole therefore, since trouble springeth not out of the ground, but is sent and directed by an all-gracious, wise, and powerful God, since afflictions are the common burthen of our nature, and the very severest of them are not the adequate wages of our crimes, since they are generally more than counterpoised with blessings, are to be endured but a short time, and will if properly borne turn to a good account, for these several reasons, if thou
come

come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation. Set thy heart, and constantly endure and make not haste in time of trouble. Cleave unto him and depart not away, that thou mayest be encreased at thy latter end. Whatsoever is brought upon thee take chearfully, and be patient when thou art changed to a low estate; that so suffering according to the will of God, we may commit the keeping of our souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

Now to God the Father, God the Son,
and God the Holy Ghost, &c. &c.

S E R M O N VII.

MATTHEW vi. 11th.

Give us this day our daily Bread.

THIS is the only petition in the Lord's Prayer, which immediately relates to our temporal prosperity, and the obtaining of such things as are necessary to our Being and well-being in this life. Many of the primitive Christians were of opinion, that the Bread which our Lord here teaches us to pray for, was not to be understood of any good things relating to the body, but of the Eucharistical Bread in the Lord's Supper, and of the spiritual sustenance thereby conveyed to the soul by the increase of
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of grace; and hence arose the custom of receiving that sacrament every day. The error of this opinion however is sufficiently evident, from a consideration of the time wherein our Saviour taught his disciples this prayer, and the time wherein he instituted the sacrament, the one in the very infancy of his ministry, the other, not till the eve of his crucifixion; so that during that interval, the Apostles, and all who made use of this prayer, must, in repeating this petition for their daily bread, have petitioned for they knew not what, and prayed without any effect upon the understanding and heart; a thing not supposable in any, much less in such a master as Christ; whose doctrines are all calculated for the edification of his disciples, and who cannot therefore be thought to have inserted in a form of prayer composed for their use, a petition which, for some length

length of time, could not possibly be of any use to them at all.

Instead therefore of perplexing ourselves with vain suppositions, I shall embrace that plain and easy meaning, which is most free from all objections, and was most probably intended by our Lord, and received by his disciples; namely, that by Bread here we are to understand all the necessaries, conveniencies, and comforts of this life, all that may be necessary for our support, and conduce to our refreshment.

Bread being the chief support of life, is, by a figure very common with all, but more especially with the Scripture writers, set to denote all the other various things requisite for that purpose. By daily Bread here prayed for we are to understand such a portion of those good things as may be
sufficient

sufficient for the day being, which, considering the weakness and mortality of our nature, is a great, nay and a greater continuance, than we can with certainty promise ourselves in this life. But though the term of our life may possibly extend no farther than the present day, yet as it may, for any thing that we can tell, be lengthened out to many years, we are therefore taught to pray that this Bread may be given us this day, or, as saint Luke has it, day by day, a phrase according to Hebrew writers, signifying the whole term of our lives, that God would during our Being here, be it longer or shorter, supply us with such things as are necessary for our well-being here, in such a manner, and in such proportions as he shall see most conducive to our real benefit. This is the true purport of the petition, and though spiritual good things are of the greatest moment,

moment, and consequently demand our chief concern, yet, let zeal without knowledge pretend what it will, temporal good things demand, and indeed deserve our reasonable attention. It is absolutely necessary, that we should pray to the Author of our being for such things as are necessary to preserve it, for such things as reason and scripture make it our duty to seek, and which yet without his concurrence we should seek in vain; that we should pray in the words of our Lord, according to the sense now given of them, for our daily bread, and in the language of our church, ask those things which are requisite and necessary, as well for the body as the soul.

This petition is calculated to breed in us a thorough persuasion of, and dependance upon the providence of God in general, and particularly as it relates to the supply
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of our wants. It naturally implies to us, that the same God which at first created, still governs and preserves the world, that no persons are exempted from his jurisdiction, that the most minute occurrences of life are at his disposal, that without his blessing all our labours are ineffectual, and the wisest, most industrious, and careful man on earth, is not able without his concurrence to acquire even his daily bread. This is a lesson, which many who are wise in their own conceits find it difficult to learn; exalted in dignity and power, great in human knowledge and worldly wisdom, they imagine every thing to be within their own reach, there is nothing which they cannot do themselves of themselves, and therefore it is unnecessary to have recourse to a Providence, and apply for the assistance of foreign aid, when their own forces
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are so amply sufficient to accomplish all their desires.

It is this vain and presumptuous way of thinking, which leads men into numberless miscarriages, which induces them to despise the useful assistances of men, and to reject their necessary dependance upon God, which renders them at length (when they experimentally find the vanity of human wisdom and the weakness of human strength) the contempt of the greater part of mankind, and the pity of the wiser few, who will happily learn from their error and disappointment, to trust in the Lord with all their heart, and not to lean on their own understanding.

If we look into ourselves with an impartial eye, we shall easily discern the numberless

berless things which we stand in need of in this world, and at the same glance see the impossibility of our acquiring them of ourselves; and such persons, as seem the farthest removed from these wants, who are blest with the greatest affluence, will find abundant reason, when they consider the uncertainty of human affairs, to distrust their own prosperous condition, and apply to Providence, who was the first giver, to be the continuer also of those blessings, which are in themselves so uncertain, and always upon the wing. Man indeed, upon a fair review of himself, of his wants and weakness, ought to esteem it his greatest happiness, that there is a resource above to which he may always betake himself, that there is an overruling Providence in whom are centered infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, which are continually displaying themselves in the most perfect harmony, and

and graciously co-operating for his good. Left to ourselves, what miserable creatures should we be? but happily for us we have a support much better than ourselves, and where man fails, God strengthens and supports. Happy are we, would we but be wise enough to know, and humble enough to acknowledge it, in the assistance of an almighty power, the direction of an all-comprehending wisdom, the liberality of an all-sustaining goodness.

Here then is thy stay O man, here is thy only solid dependance. Throw off those vain and deceitful dependances which arise from things transitory, repose thyself upon thy Maker, and get thee to thy God right humbly. To him apply who is always ready to hear, and able to relieve thee; on him depend, who will not, who cannot deceive thee. Whether thou dost petition
for

for the obtaining of what thou wantest, or the continuance of what thou hast, for things of greater or less consequence, whether matters of conveniency and comfort are the subjects of thy prayers, or in the humility of thine heart thou askest only for thy daily Bread literally understood, be assured that if you pray as you ought, you shall obtain what you pray for, if it is really for your good.

And this leads me to consider, which I shall make the remaining business of this discourse, what qualifications are requisite, to sanctify our offering up of this petition, to render it acceptable in the sight of God, and procure an happy return to it.

The first thing necessary towards procuring what we want, is a proper use of what we have; and this petition doth

naturally warn us against the dangerous extremes of extravagance and avarice, and recommends to us that liberality on the one hand, which in opposition to avarice, enables us to enjoy what we have, and that frugality on the other, which in opposition to extravagance, serves to render our enjoyments lasting. Vain and presumptuous is it for man to expect that the liberal hand of Providence will continue to shower down blessings upon him, which he ungratefully makes a bad use of, or not less ungratefully makes no use at all. Instances there are, and not a few in the world, of men, who seem to think that Providence is employed entirely for them, and that the chief business of the general supporter of mankind is a particular attention to, and a constant readiness to furnish them with materials to gratify their most irregular inclinations, and support them

them in their extravagancies; whilst others not less mistaken, esteem themselves most justly entitled to the favours of Providence, because they with great good œconomy make no use of them at all; have neither the heart to enjoy their riches themselves, nor to communicate them to others. The truth indeed is this; both these extremes are bad, both disqualify us from being worthy repeaters of this petition, and cut off those hopes which we otherwise might reasonably entertain of offering it up with success. The extravagant man is guilty of presumption, in daring to depend upon a continuance of those blessings which he continually abuses; and the covetous man, whilst he is fearful of using what he hath lest he should come to want, is guilty of that distrust in Providence, which is contrary to the design, and destructive of the foundation of this petition. In a word,

those who shew themselves unworthy of possessing what they have, shew themselves unworthy also of obtaining what they ask.

The next thing necessary to render this petition successful, is moderation in our requests. A great privilege it is, a real blessing, that God commands us to offer up, and promises to receive, our prayers; but great and ungrateful insolence surely it is in us, if we abuse that privilege, if we presume upon that promise so far as to ask more than God hath given us warrant to expect. Though the goodness of the divine nature is such, that he is willing to overlook our infirmities, and put our sins far from us, though he hath graciously promised to listen to our petitions, and grant our requests, yet this promise is made to us not absolutely, but still at the discretion of his perfect wisdom; and greatly indeed

indeed is it to be feared, that if men were certainly to obtain what they prayed for, the efficacy of prayer would by the folly of man be turned into a curse, instead of proving a blessing.

Would men rightly consider, whereas indeed great numbers of them never consider at all, they would easily see that prayer was never designed as a means of gratifying ambition, avarice, or sensuality; but of obtaining those real necessities, those material conveniencies, those solid comforts, from an all-sustaining Providence, which nature requires, and could not be happy without. The real wants, nay, and the reasonable comforts of man lye within a very small compass. Hurried on by mad passions indeed, and forming vast and visionary schemes, we multiply, we aggravate our wants, and of one real create

a thousand imaginary necessities; whereas Nature in herself, that is, Nature supported and directed by Reason, is contented with a little, and doth not require a great deal to give her that happiness which she is capable of in her present state. We deceive ourselves therefore, if we imagine that this petition gives us an unbounded right of asking, in the extravagance of our hearts, for the delicacies and superfluities of life; all that our Saviour warrants is our petitioning for the necessities and conveniencies of it; for our daily Bread, and that from day to day.

But after all, after we have worked ourselves up to a proper pitch of confidence in the Providence of God, made a proper use of those good things which he hath already blest us with, and regulated our desires for what we pray according to the dictates

dictates of reason still, there remains something farther to be done; and an honest industry is required on our parts to make us worthy of God's assistance.

From some passages in Scripture, misunderstood and wretchedly perverted, explained in a manner contrary to reason, and contrary to other express passages in Scripture which can never be misunderstood, there have not been wanting, and perhaps never will be wanting, men who would willingly talk industry out of the world, and call laziness and indolence dependance upon Providence; who, truly enthusiast-like, pretending to seek the kingdom of God, presume that all these things shall be added unto them, without any care, any trouble on their side. How contrary is this to reason, to the circumstances of the world, to the doctrines of Christianity?

The Scriptures do no where countenance a supine throwing ourselves upon Providence, without any farther concern for ourselves. We have no right to expect a miraculous interposition in our behalf, to hope that we shall be fed, as the Israelites, with food from Heaven, or think that our lands, like Gideon's fleece, shall be well watered, whilst all around us are dry and barren. These are particular vouchsafements of Providence, and not to be expected by us; but when we do the best we can, when we acquit ourselves like diligent, industrious and provident men, then may we pray to God to crown our labours with success, then may we depend upon him for our daily bread, and live securely under his care and protection, without perplexing ourselves with vain fears; and all fears are vain, when we have secured ourselves an
interest

interest in the most High, who is always willing, always able to supply our wants

To crown the rest, let us lastly add Charity. Sensible of our own wants, let us consider our brethren; and whilst we in this petition acknowledge our dependance upon Providence, let us in a more acceptable manner acknowledge it, by shewing our regard to his creatures. All that we have, all that we hope for, we here refer to God, and ought in good reason to bestow some part of it in the manner which he hath appointed; to deal out our bread to the hungry, and to consider the cause of the poor; to be merciful to our brethren in proportion as God has been favourable to us.

There is no one duty which is so highly extolled in Scripture, and hath so many powerful

powerful motives to enforce it, as Charity; and if we expect the continuance of the blessings of Providence, the best way to ensure them is to be merciful as our Father is merciful.

I would not be understood to mean (making that a general which was only a particular precept) that it is the duty of every rich man to sell all, and give to the poor, much less, according to the maxims of our inspired preachers, that it is the duty of the poor to sell all, and give to the rich; so far from it, that it is every man's duty to provide for his family, and Christianity doth not destroy, but confirms the law of nature, and the rules of prudence. What is required of us is, not to deceive ourselves, by fancying our necessities greater and our abilities less than they really are, but to follow at once the dictates of Prudence

S E R M O N VII. 171

dence and Charity, not giving away so much as to expose ourselves to future want, nor yet distributing so little, as to be unworthy petitioners to Providence, for the supply of our own necessities.

Having thus seen the nature and extent of this petition, with the qualifications requisite to make our repeating of it acceptable to God; I shall, according to the manner I have hitherto observed, conclude this discourse by summing up the whole in the form of a prayer.

O thou all-gracious, all-sustaining Providence, by whose goodness we were created, and by whose goodness we have hitherto been preserved, continue to us thy favour and protection; give us such a just knowledge both of thee, and of ourselves, that we may be thoroughly sensible we are thy dependants,

dependants, that we are indebted to thee for all we have, and must apply to thee for all we want. Grant, O Lord, that we may so live in this world, as men that must leave it at one time or other, that may continue perhaps for a few years, or may be taken off this very moment; make us sensible how few our real wants are, and let not our desires go beyond them. Let thy mercies crown our industrious endeavours with success, and a well timed seasonable Charity, sanctify our works, and give strength to our prayers. And finally, O Lord, be pleased of thine infinite mercy to grant, that whatsoever we sincerely pray for, we may successfully obtain, whatsoever we successfully obtain, we may happily enjoy.

Now to God the Father, &c.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N VIII.

MATTHEW vi. 12th.

*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive
our debtors.*

IN these words are two things observable;—the Petition—forgive us our debts,—and the condition on which we ask forgiveness—as we forgive our debtors. Both these are subjects that greatly deserve our consideration—the one as it affords the highest instance of God's goodness to the sons of men, the other as containing a motive to the forgiveness of our enemies, which is one of the hardest of all Christian duties. I shall therefore particularly consider them, and shall shew that the mercy
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and goodness of God, is remarkably displayed, by the permission here given us to pray to him, for the forgiveness of our sins.

The temporal blessings which his Providence dispenses for the supply of our wants, are arguments indeed of great goodness to us, and deserve our highest gratitude and love. But these are concerns of small moment to us, in comparison of those which look beyond the grave, and yield a prospect of better things to come. For what would it avail us to be supplied by his bounty with the necessaries of this present life, if our sins were to follow us in the next? If the sins and offences of our youth and old age were registered and treasured up against us, if no act of oblivion was to pass on our actions, no pardon granted, no method of atonement appointed

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ed to blot out our sins, no assurance that our prayers shall be heard, no direction to ask that our debts may be forgiven as we forgive our debtors, we should as the Apostle says, all have been concluded under sin, and consequently under punishment; our condemnation had been sure, our sentence irreverfible, and the bleffings and conveniencies we at present enjoy, would only have ferved to make eafy our paffage to a ftate of everlafting mifery; and who could be fo fond of a fhort momentary life, as to value it upon fuch terms as thefe? It is the glorious profpect we have before us, the certainty that if we are not wanting to ourfelves we may work out our own falvation, and obtain by the fatisfaction of our Saviour, what we were not able to fecure for ourfelves; the means of forgiveness are placed in our own hands, and therefore it will be our own faults if we mifcarry.

miscarry. And when we consider the wretched state we were in before Christ undertook our ransom, the necessity of sinning, the certainty of our punishment, and how little reason there was for God to accept of a satisfaction and reconcile us to himself; we cannot but esteem it a wonderful instance of God's goodness that he was pleased to provide a remedy, and point out a method by which Mercy might take place, and yet Justice be fully satisfied.

The use therefore that we ought to make of this amazing goodness, is first to reflect with gratitude, to acknowledge the sense we have of our unworthiness to receive it, and the utter impossibility of our obtaining mercy without the free grace of God.

As there was nothing in our power to influence God to shew us mercy, as there was

was no satisfaction but the blood of our Redeemer that could consistently with God's justice, be accepted by him, our condition was quite desperate; and no one could have expected, that God himself should submit to pay the ransom for us, or indeed that it was possible to unite the divine nature in such a manner to our sinful flesh, that as man had sinned so man should suffer; and yet that his sufferings by virtue of that Union, should be a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, though impossible for mere man to make it. But thus it was ordered; thus was God satisfied, and Man redeemed from misery. And he who is not affected by such benefits as these, who can reflect on them without love and gratitude, as he certainly will, so he well deserves to lose them, since notwithstanding Christ's sufferings, his portion will be no better for them.

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And this leads me to observe another use we ought to make of God's goodness thus manifested to us, which is, that we labour to secure the blessings thus purchased for us by the blood of Christ. It is true, there is now no other sacrifice required by God, but the Blood of our Redeemer, who was wounded for our transgressions, was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes were we healed. But we are not so healed and recovered, as to be in no danger of relapsing; we are not so rescued from the bondage of sin, as to be perfectly secure of God's favour for the future. The Christian life is a state of trial and conflict; he who bought us with a price hath a right to our Obedience, and when he exempted us from the punishment of our sins, he required us to forsake them, to abstain from all wilful,

wilful, and premeditated offences, and to repent of those miscarriages, which through the frailty and infirmity of our nature are unavoidable; above all to pray to God for mercy and forgiveness, and in order to obtain it, to be ready to forgive others; as Christ hath taught us, forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. So that to forgive those that trespass against us, is a necessary condition without which we cannot pray for the forgiveness of our trespasses.

Since then it is a matter of so much consequence to our happiness, and a duty, which if we may judge from the practice of mankind, is one of the most difficult of any our religion requires, I shall make it my business to consider it more particularly.

In order to come to a full knowledge of these words, we must first enquire in what extent they are to be understood; for in the same extent that we pray to be forgiven, it is our duty to forgive. Now when we pray to God to forgive us our trespasses, we do not only mean that he shall not punish us for them, but also that he should restore us to the same degree of love and favour that we stood in before we sinned, that he would extend the goodness of his Providence to us, and vouchsafe us both temporal and eternal blessings. Of what great importance it is to us to be thus restored to God's favour is obvious to any one; but there is one condition annexed to it which is to be feared does sometimes prevent men from attempting it, and this is the forgiveness of our enemies; by which we are not to understand the mere abstaining
from

from hurting them, but also the seeking every opportunity to do them good.

We ought according to our Saviour's command to love our enemies, bless them that curse us, do good to them that hate us, and pray for them which despitefully use and persecute us. This is the description that our Saviour gives us of this duty, and the greatest objection against the practice of it arises from the vast difficulty that is supposed to attend it. Many have gone so far as to say it might be performed by an holy Apostle or perfect Saviour, but was without the reach of a common Christian; and indeed in our present circumstances, the corruption of our nature, the violence of our passions, and the mistaken notions of the world considered, it is of all Christian duties by far the most difficult to perform. But since God has made it the condition

upon which we are to expect forgiveness, it is absolutely necessary for us to perform it, before we can have any title to the promise; for as our Saviour assures us, if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses.

If we consider in how much greater a degree we have offended against God, than it is possible for any one to offend against us, we shall soon see the reasonableness of performing the condition for the reward annexed to it. The hopes of having our sins pardoned, and obtaining eternal salvation should certainly appear of such value in our sight, as no labour however hard, no task however difficult should deter us from such great expectations, much less should
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the reasonable duty of doing as we would be done by, of forgiving others that we ourselves may obtain forgiveness. If God is willing to remit to us a debt of so vast amount as ten thousand talents, shall we, with the wicked servant in the Gospel, rigorously exact from a fellow servant the payment of an hundred pence? Should not we also have compassion on our fellow servants even as God has pity on us?

There are many motives to enforce the forgiveness of injuries besides this, and one of these is, that it is an action truly great and honourable. Whatever advantages an high and revengeful spirit may have in the eyes of the world, and however mean it may be esteemed to put up and forgive injuries, Religion teaches us quite a different lesson. It instructs us that nothing can be truly honourable, which is not truly good,

that nothing can be truly good which is not agreeable to the will of God ; and that nothing can be agreeable to the will of God which is contrary to the laws his blessed Son has given us in the Gospel ; and these prescribe to us to be meek as he is meek, and lowly as he is lowly.

But to descend from Religion to the opinion of the world. If there is any honour in gaining a victory, then is the forgiveness of injuries truly honourable. It places us in eminence above our enemy, it gives us an invincible superiority over him, it makes us proof against all his devices, and unhurt by all his attacks ; we either make him our friend, or convince mankind that he ought not to be our enemy ; we either deprive him of the inclination to prejudice us, or subject him to the contempt of all good men if he perseveres in it ;
and

and at the same time that we make known the meekness of our disposition by forgiving his ill offices, we approve our resolution by not attending to the consequences of his anger. If our enemy is worth the gaining, Forgiveness is the best and most approved method to accomplish that end; if he is not, Forgiveness is the best method of punishing him, as it serves most effectually to disappoint his aim, to shew that his malice cannot reach us, and to gall him with that thought which men can least bear, that we hold him in contempt, and think him beneath our notice.

A false notion of honour may represent to us the conquering of an enemy as a great and glorious action; but true reason will tell us, that to conquer ourselves, and forgive an enemy, is much more great, and, as it is more difficult, more honourable likewise.

likewise. This is indeed a species of honour which will scarce find its way into the breast of a Hero, and meet with a favourable reception from those who call rashness courage, and disgrace the name of Honour by applying it improperly. Consider the present acceptation of that word; we might imagine that it was the sworn foe of Honesty, Reason, and Religion, instead of being the genuine offspring of them all. A modern Man of Honour (as He calls himself, and as the World will be complaisant enough to call him) lives to Passion, and not to Reason; He lives in a constant subjection to the opinions of others, nor for a moment suffers himself to have an opinion of his own; he takes things upon trust from those whom he ought least to depend upon; he fears shame more than guilt, the imputation of crimes more than being criminal; he trembles at reproach (though

(though undeservd) more than at danger, or even death, and prides himself on his courage at the very instant that he gives the strongest proof of his being a Coward. To revenge, even in what we miscall an honourable way, is an effort which many a Coward hath against his nature forced himself to make, but we cannot meet with a single instance where he could induce himself to forgive. This is a task left for men of great and generous dispositions, for men who are as much above fearing, as doing ill, for men who have a true sense of Honour, and, in consequence thereof, doing every thing which They ought to do, fear nothing but what They ought to fear.

Another, and no weak motive to the forgiveness of our enemies, is that quiet, and satisfaction of mind which naturally results from it. The man of a revengeful spirit

spirit lives in a perpetual storm, he is his own tormentor, and his guilt of course becomes his punishment. Those passions, which prompt him to wreak his vengeance on his enemies, war against his own soul, and are inconsistent with his peace. Whether he is at home or abroad, alone or in company, They still adhere to him, and engross his thoughts; and Providence hath with the greatest reason ordained, that whosoever meditates against the peace of another shall, even in the design, lose his own. The thoughts of Revenge break in upon his most serious and important business, embitter his most rational entertainments, and forbid him to relish any of those good things which God hath placed within his reach; ever intent on the contrivance of mischief, or engaged in the execution, mortified with disappointments, or, his designs accomplished, tortured with reflection,
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he lives the life of a devil here on earth, and carries about a hell in his own breast. Whereas the meek man, who lives in a constant course of good will to all, who gives no man cause to be his enemy, and dares to forgive those who are so without a cause, hath a constant spring of pleasure in himself; let what will happen from without, he is sure of peace within. So far from being afraid to converse with himself, he seeks and is happy in the opportunity of doing it, and meets with nothing in his own breast but what encourages him to keep up and cherish that acquaintance. The Passions which he finds there, instead of being tyrants, are servants; he knows the danger of obeying, and the impossibility of rooting them out; and, whilst he forbids them to assume an undue influence, makes them the instruments of promoting his happiness. Happy in himself, he is easy to all;

all; he is a friend to mankind in general, and not an enemy even to those who hate him; doth a momentary thought of revenge arise in his mind, he suppresses it; if on no other considerations, for his own sake; this he knows to be his duty, and this he finds to be his pleasure; blest with those feelings, which shall not leave him at the grave, he imitates the Deity in benevolence, and obtains, as far as mortals can obtain, the happiness of the Deity in return.

Left these considerations prove ineffectual, let me add the necessity we lay under of forgiving our enemies, or of relinquishing all hopes of being forgiven. There is no alternative. We must do it, or resign all pretensions to the benefits of Christ's passion. Though the performance of this duty alone will not entitle us to the forgiveness of our sins; yet this we are most specially

pecially instructed in, that the performance of all other duties, without this, will be of no avail. The difficulty, attending this work, instead of taking off our attention, ought to double it, and quicken our endeavours; That it is necessary to be done, the Scriptures inform us, and therefore it must be undertaken; That it is difficult to be done, our own feelings inform us, and therefore it should be undertaken with spirit; That it is not impossible to be done, and that we may accomplish it if we will, the very enjoinment of the duty implies; That, when accomplished, we shall not lose our reward, the Considerations I have already mentioned, with our own observation and experience, will happily evince.

Now to God the Father, &c.

S E R M O N IX.

MATTHEW vi. 13th.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

THIS Petition consists of two parts; the one, lead us not into temptation, the other, but deliver us from evil. For the more particular understanding the former part, it will be proper to remove such acceptations of the word temptation, as are not intended in the use of this Petition: and since it is here supposed that God may lead a man into temptation, I will consider in what sense that must be understood in this place.

A man

A man may be said to lead another into temptation, when he entices him to sin, or by any argument, art, or violence, persuades or compels him to it. But we are not to understand any thing of this nature on God's part—for in this sense, God tempts no man. He neither designs, or lays any trap or snares, to make men sin: he purposes nothing to their hopes or fears, to deceive, allure, or fright them into sin; nor does he by any impulse on their minds, incline or necessitate them to sin; to conceive such things as these of God, would be the highest impiety

Again. To tempt a man may signify in general to prove and try him, whether he will faithfully discharge his duty, and answer another's expectation of him, or not. In this sense, it is certain, God tempts every man; that is, he gives him occasions

and opportunities of performing, or refusing to do his duty. Thus the laws of God to mankind in general, or to Christians in particular, the former by Nature, the latter by Revelation, are temptations or trials of our obedience, whether we will observe them or not; and in regard that the circumstances of men are very various, and that they have respective duties to be performed, therefore every man's particular condition of life, his honour or meanness, his wealth or poverty, his authority or subjection, his single or married state, his temper and constitution of body, his health or sickness, his calling and profession, in a word, his condition in life; with respect to circumstances of this nature, which are infinite, is a temptation or trial; whether he will live up to the general rules of his religion, and perform that duty which his place, relation, and peculiar interest in the world,

world, require of him. In this sense then, every man is led into temptation; that is, he hath the general rules of religion to observe, and the particular duties proper to his place and condition to perform. And God who requires these, and by whose providence men are put into such circumstances, may so far be said to lead a man into Temptation. But as every man in this sense, is, and must be tempted, this cannot be the meaning of the words, when we pray, not to be led into Temptation. By Temptation we may here also understand, those hazardous trials with which God is pleased sometimes to prove good, and punish wicked men. So that God may be said to lead a man into Temptation, when he permits some extraordinary accidents to befall him, in order to try his sincerity. It is impossible to mention the various kinds of Temptation to which we are liable, and

perhaps it would be very hard for any man to declare which Temptation he could best resist, or which would be most difficult to him. We are so ignorant of ourselves, in things of this nature, that we know not what trial we can best encounter; therefore, we ought to leave the petition to God in general, as our Saviour hath here taught us, namely that God would not lead us into Temptation, or that he would keep those Temptations from us, which he, who best knows our make and frame, by his infinite wisdom sees will most endanger us.

Having thus considered the first part of this petition, I proceed to the second.

But deliver us from evil: which signifies the same, and something more than the former. The same, as including deliverance from great and dangerous temptations; but
more,

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more, as the evil is greater to fall under Temptations, than only to be tempted. If considered in the former sense, it implies God's providence in allotting us such a portion in this life, as he sees is best for our spiritual estate, and in removing from us whatever he knows to be inconsistent therewith. It is also to be understood of those innumerable methods of Providence, by which God keeps men from sundry temptations that would befall them, if he did not interpose to prevent them. Taking it in the latter sense, as keeping us from being overcome by temptations when they happen, then the petition means, the good providence of God without us, and the motions and operations of his holy Spirit within us, whereby he supports and preserves those who in the time of their trials trust in him. God delivers us by his outward providences, and which are very con-

siderable; sometimes by the good examples
 of others labouring under the same circum-
 stances, sometimes by the faithful advice
 of a friend, the seasonable presence of a
 good man, a sudden change in our fortunes,
 and divers unforeseen accidents, casual in-
 deed to us, but purposely ordered by the
 wise disposal of God, to prevent our being
 led away by Temptations that assault us;
 therefore, in this prayer, we commit our-
 selves to the good Providence of God,
 that he would still continue to preserve us
 by such ways as to his wisdom seems most
 requisite. By the operations of his holy
 spirit within us, he delivers us from evil
 under Temptation, when he represents to
 us the reasons of our duty, and strongly
 impresses them on our minds; whereby
 good men have been often rescued from
 their passions, and kept from falling when
 on the brink of danger. Therefore, in this
 prayer

prayer we intreat God not to cast us away from his presence, nor take his holy spirit from us, that he would not forsake us when we are in the greatest danger of forgetting him, but that his grace may prevent us from yielding to any Temptation, whether sudden, violent, or long, that so we may never be tempted above what we are able to bear.

I shall now offer some considerations that should make us in good earnest pray against Temptations, that they may not overcome us, nor draw us into sin.

First, let us consider the great consequence of being overcome by Temptations.

If we are prevailed on to act contrary to our duty, the best end we can make is a sorrowful repentance; and which if sincere,

brings abundantly more trouble, than the transitory enjoyment and satisfaction of the most pleasing sin. The advantage gained by consenting to a Temptation, is gone long before we come to repent. Revenge is no longer sweet, than while the passion of malice lasts, and what a man acquires unjustly, must be restored the moment true repentance begins. So that it is evidently necessary for our own ease and quiet, not to enter into Temptation, or fall by it, though we should repent and reform, which is the best end we can promise ourselves; but if we suppose the worst, that a man grows more easy to his sins, and more readily yields to the Devil's suggestions, so as to fill up the measure of his iniquity, what follows? nothing less than fire unquenchable. If then we are concerned for the end, if we fear the dreadful sentence of everlasting misery, we have need, great need to pray,
Lord,

Lord, lead us not into Temptation, but deliver us from Evil.

The great difficulty of resisting Temptations, is another reason for our using this petition in good earnest. For if we consider the variety and number of Temptations, we shall find no age, calling, or condition of life, no constitution of body or mind, totally free from all Temptations.

Youth is solicited by pleasure and wantonness; riper years by the cares and pride of life; old age by discontent and spitefulness, and, to the admiration of all considerate persons, by senseless covetousness. A calling gives an opportunity for dishonesty and hard-dealing, griping and oppressions, and administers Temptations to falsehood and lying. A free sanguine temper is apt to run into improprieties, and good-nature
into

into debauchery; a reserved disposition into fullness and discontent; so that every constitution hath its incident danger. If we converse with our friends, we are in danger of being flattered, if with our enemies, of encreasing malice and revenge. Commendation is apt to make us vain, reproof angry, reproach and contempt to fill us with hatred. If one hath more wealth, honour, beauty, or respect than another, he is ready to be elated with pride; or if he sees himself herein excelled by any, that is a Temptation to envy.

If we live in ease and plenty, we are in danger of falling into sloth and idleness; if we have much to do, then contention, peevishness and all the vices incident to business, lie in wait to assault us. It is hard to bear sickness after long health, and to fall from wealth into poverty, or take
up

up the cross. As in a suffering condition, there are Temptations which naturally arise, and the change itself is a very severe one, so when a man unexpectedly comes into prosperity, luxury and wantonness, pride and forgetfulness of God, will then more easily beset him.

In a word, we are exposed to the danger of divers sins and lusts, each of which has several Temptations, and the one often makes the other stronger. Being then thus beset with dangers, it behoves us not only to be very circumspect, but to pray also, Lord, save us, or we perish.

The frequency of Temptations is also another argument to prove the necessity of constant prayer. The Temptation may be changed, but is never quite removed. Whilst we are in the world we are still on
trial

trial and duty. We have many enemies near at hand, always busy and urgent upon us, so that we had need to watch and pray. A man's table is a snare to him, his wealth an occasion of falling; he is often betrayed into excess, when he suspects no danger; if full of business, he is exposed to irreligion, covetousness, and anger; if inclined to company, he is easily seduced to evil speaking; he hath his tongue to bridle, his appetites and passions to manage, and to preserve himself from the temptations of foolish mirth, uncharitable censures, and all the vices of conversation.

Lastly, we have our own depraved nature to struggle with. Our outward senses are ever ready to let in Temptation, our imagination to entertain it, and our reason not strong enough to resist it. We are also beset with a subtle and malicious adversary,
who

who goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; his approaches are sly and imperceptible; he is busy about us, when we think not of him. We are doing his work and consenting to his suggestions, when we only suppose ourselves to be gratifying an unreasonable appetite, to please a companion, or false friend. On all these accounts then, it behoves us to pray in good earnest, that we may not be led into Temptation, but delivered from Evil; and this brings me to observe, lastly, what qualifications are necessary to make us sincere in praying to be delivered from Temptation. And these are, to have a modest and humble opinion of ourselves, to be sensible of the dangers, difficulties, and our own inability to prevail against them, without the special grace of God. We must also have a firm belief and trust in the grace and providence of God, acknowledging

ledging that he governs and over-rules all things; that the course of this world is not merely conducted by natural causes, and the free-will of man; but that God always can, and sometimes does interpose, to alter the course of nature, and the inclinations of free agents, for the benefit of the good, and the punishment of the wicked.

Lastly, we must be most willing and desirous to keep innocence, and to do the thing that is right; otherwise we do not, in good earnest, desire the concurrence of God's providence and grace to this purpose. And this our sincerity we should express by a general care of doing all we can to contribute towards it; more particularly in not encouraging evil thoughts and imaginations, which tend to corrupt our wills and affections, and to make them break out into practice. He that plays with wanton, ambitious,

ambitious, or covetous fancies, is acting for the Devil against himself. To be often thinking on the riches and advantages of another, is the beginning of envy. We are therefore to watch and pray, that we enter not into Temptation, and the man who will not watch over himself, is not fit to pray that God would watch over him.

We must also be careful to avoid all Temptation to sin as much as possible, and every thing that will make our duty difficult. If we do not ourselves carefully avoid Temptation, how can we desire God to keep us from it. Every man should consider in what instances he is most likely to be tempted. This, upon an examination of our past actions we may easily find. For if we are ignorant of our own temper, yet we may easily know what our practice has been, and from thence learn what those temptations

temptations and occasions of sin are, which we should principally shun. To reflect on our past conversation, cannot indeed undo what has happened, but it may prevent the like for the future, by rendering us more cautious and vigilant. And he who doth not seriously endeavour to know his greatest danger, and how to avoid it, speaks words at random, when he desires God to deliver him from Temptation.

To conclude; in all the prayers we offer to God for any blessing or good thing in behalf of ourselves or others, it is thereby implied that we promise God to contribute all that we can towards their being effected; and therefore, if we do not perform what we so promise, our prayer is no better than that of a hypocrite; whereas, if we do, we may rest assured, that God will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able

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able to bear, but that, with the Temptation, he will also make a way for us to escape.

Now to God the Father, &c.

S E R M O N X.

MATTHEW vi. 13th.

*For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory, for ever. Amen.*

HAVING finished what I intended on the former part of the Lord's Prayer, I am now to discourse on the Conclusion, which contains first, a doxology, or solemn giving glory to God, thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory for ever; and secondly, an expression of our full approbation of, and hearty consent to the whole prayer, in the word, Amen. I shall therefore explain the meaning of these words, and shew what sense we ought to have in our minds, when we express them; and
then

then observe what duties we may learn, and are instructed in, by the use thereof.

These words may be understood as a recognition and acknowledgment of the greatness and majesty of God, and may be thus paraphrased. We heartily acknowledge thy supreme dominion over us, and the whole world; we adore and worship thee as the great King, the Sovereign Lord of all. We also humbly admire and praise that infinite power, whereby thou governeſt the world, and orderest all the affairs of it according to thine own pleasure; and we give thee the glory of thy Greatness and Power, for all the good thou doſt to any, eſpecially for ~~what~~ thou beſtoweſt on us: and laſtly, we hereby acknowledge that God is unchangeable, that he ever was, and will be, as great, powerful, and glorious

as he now is, being infinitely and eternally the same, yesterday, to-day and for ever.

We may also understand these words as assigning some reasons inducing us to ask, and God to grant us our several requests; and the connection between these words, and the foregoing petition by the word For, seems to favour this interpretation. And then the full sense that we ought to have in our minds, when we say this Conclusion of the Lord's Prayer, will be thus.

And having now offered up our Petitions for what we want, it is but fit that we should also render thee our praise and thanks for what we have received. We therefore acknowledge that thou art a great King, whom we ought to worship with the lowest reverence, and that thy Power is infinite
to

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to grant what we have requested. We confess that thy Glory is above all, and humbly desire that thou mayest be glorified in all things. Lastly we acknowledge, that thy kingdom, power, and glory are for ever, eternal and immutable; and therefore we will at all times put our whole trust in thee, because thou canst never fail us.

From this form of praise being added by our Lord, to that form of Prayer which he hath taught us to use, we may learn, that it is always our duty to join to our prayers for what we want, our praises and thanksgivings also for the mercies that we have received, with joyful acknowledgments of his majesty, greatness and bounty; that we should pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks, and by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let our requests be made known unto God. And in parti-

cular from the first clause of this doxology, for thine is the kingdom, we are reminded that it is our duty in all things to submit to the will of God, and to resign ourselves to his disposal, he having sovereign dominion over all.

From the second clause of it, thine is the power, we should learn that it is our duty, in all straits and difficulties, to apply for his grace to help, direct, and support us, and in all our dangers and wants to rely on his Almighty Power, to relieve and deliver us.

From the third clause of it, thine is the glory, we are taught to direct all our actions to his Glory, to whom we here acknowledge that all the glory is due. According to the Apostle therefore, whether
ye

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ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do
all to the Glory of God.

Lastly, from that eternity which we here
acknowledge in all the divine attributes
and perfections, we are taught to worship
God continually, to praise him evermore,
and to give divine honours to none besides
him; because he is God from everlasting
to everlasting, the only God, and will not
give his Glory to another.

As to the word Amen, it signifies verily,
truly, or the like; a phrase often used by
our Saviour at the beginning of his speeches,
to engage the attention of his hearers to
what he was going to say. This being the
proper meaning of the word Amen, the
design of adding it at the conclusion of any
discourse, is to affirm what had been before
said, thereby declaring our approbation and

consent thereto. Thus when we repeat the Creed, we say Amen; where it signifies so it is, this is the true Faith, or all this I stedfastly believe. And in like manner is the word used, in the Communion ordered to be read on the first day of Lent.

When we say Amen at the end of the Creed, or any profession of our belief, it means the same as if we repeated over again all that profession of our Faith, which we had before made in several words and sentences, and is a fresh declaration of our consent to such articles of our Belief. But when the word Amen, is joined to the end of a Prayer, as here, it then means to express our wish and desire that what we have requested may be granted. Thus when our Lord said, surely I come quickly, the Apostle immediately adds, Amen, even so come Lord Jesus; that is, may it be as thou
hast

haſt promiſed; and of the like uſe is this word when added at the end of thoſe benedictions, wherewith moſt of the Epistles in the New Teſtament are concluded.

If therefore a Prayer is ſaid by one, and Amen added to it, is ſaid by another, as is common in our publick prayers, where the miniſter only ſpeaks, and the people ſay Amen, then it ſignifies their conſent to, and concurrence with the whole prayer uttered by the miniſter; and is the ſame as when in the Litany we beſeech God to hear us; but if Amen is ſaid by the ſame perſon who ſpeaks the Prayer, as when we add it to our private devotions, then Amen is a repetition in one word, of all that has been before ſaid in the Prayer; 'tis a freſh breathing forth of all thoſe pious deſires and affections of the mind, that had been
before

before more largely expressed. Thus much for the meaning of the word Amen.

And as we are here taught by our Lord himself to add this word at the end of our prayers, to testify our consent thereto, it from hence plainly appears, that all publick prayers ought to be expressed in such a language and stile, as they may all understand them; or otherwise they cannot say Amen, as it means their approving of, and giving a rational consent thereto. It is therefore highly expedient, nay, absolutely necessary for the edification of the Church, that the publick prayers which are intended for the use of all, should be suited to the capacities of all, and be as plain, easy, and familiar as possible, not only carefully avoiding all high flights, rhetorical figures, and flourishes, but all such words as are not of very easy meaning,

meaning, and common use. In a word, the publick Prayers should be like those of our Church; the words common, the stile easy, the sentences short, the whole phrase and compofure suited to the meanest capacity; and in general is a great advantage which premeditated Prayers have over such as are conceived extempore, since he that makes a prayer for publick use, takes time to study plainness and perspicuity, which he that prays extempore cannot do.

But above all, it is manifestly most absurd, that the publick Prayers in which all are to join, should be in an unknown tongue, in a language not understood perhaps by one in twenty in the whole congregation. The most ridiculous folly of this is sufficiently exposed by St. Paul, and among other arguments by this; that no man can rationally say Amen to a prayer uttered in
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an unknown tongue. I will, says he, pray with the spirit, and with the understanding also; I will sing with the spirit, and with the understanding also; else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen, at the giving of thanks, seeing he understands not what thou sayest; for thou verily who understandest the language thou speakest in, givest thanks well, but the other—he who understands it not—is not edified. But when we say Amen to any prayer we address to God, it is supposed that we both understood and gave attention to what went before, since we thereby give our consent to, and declare our approbation of it. But how can we do that, unless we attend to what is said?

By the word Amen therefore, we are instructed in another duty, namely, that
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when we are at Prayer, to keep our mind to our business, diligently to attend to what we are about, to avoid if possible all wandering thoughts, to be truly affected with every part of that prayer, we either speak ourselves, or hear pronounced by the minister in our names; and to have such thoughts and desires in our minds throughout the whole office, as the words we then speak do import and signify. For unless we thus attend to what we say, our service will be only lip-worship, neither acceptable to God, nor profitable to ourselves. But if in our minds we give such consent to every petition we offer up, as is fit and proper for us to give, then the word Amen at the end of all, uttered with fervency and devotion, will fully comprehend the whole prayer; and we shall repeat in one devout breath, as much as we prayed for in the whole office.

Having

Having thus gone through every part of the Lord's Prayer, I shall make but one general observation, that the whole is so framed and contrived, as to serve both for an expression of our devotion to God, and an instruction to ourselves; that the same words which teach us what to request of God, also instruct us in our duty; and excite us to the performance of it; so that its frequent use must be of singular benefit and advantage to us. But then it is a certain truth, that as no wicked man, who continues in his wickedness, can say this prayer with good attention and serious devotion, so every good person who doth say it in that manner, must needs by natural efficacy, as well as by the divine grace and blessing, be rendered much better by the use thereof. For a wicked man continuing such, cannot have those inward affections of mind towards God, that the words of
this

this prayer do exprefs, nor yet any hearty defire to obtain what he requests of God, because fuch devout affections and holy defires are directly contrary to, and inconsistent with the love and practice of Sin. For how can he presume to call upon God in prayer, who in works denies him? How can he with holy devotion call God his Father, who hath fold himself to the Devil to work wickedness, and continually exercifes himself therein? For whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself pure, and that wicked one toucheth him not. How can he say to God with true devotion, hallowed be thy name, who dishonours him in his whole life? how can he be serious in desiring the holy name of God may be sanctified by all, who is himself continually profaning and blaspheming it by wicked oaths and horrid imprecations? how can
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he pray heartily that the kingdom of God may be established in the world, who will not himself be ruled and governed by him? must not his heart give his tongue the lye, while he says with his mouth, thy kingdom come, but in his heart says unto God, depart from us, what is the Almighty that we should serve him, and what profit should we have if we pray unto him? how can a man say with true and fervent devotion, thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven, who continually opposes and resists the divine will, who neither submits to the providence of God, nor obeys his precepts, but is abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate? Indeed in the petition, give us this day our daily bread, there is nothing as to the matter but what a wicked man may agree to, for he may and often doth more earnestly desire the things of this life than the good man. But then

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as to the manner of desiring them, he can no more utter this petition with true devotion, than any of the former; because he doth not depend on God, nor expect those things from his blessing, but from his own industry and cunning; for if he regarded them as divine blessings, he would not acquire them by fraud and injustice, extortion and oppression. Nor can the wicked man with true devotion say, forgive us our trespasses, for though pardon of sins is what he wants, and ought earnestly to wish God would grant, yet it is absurd to imagine, he would offer up any petition to God, the matter of which he himself knows is highly unreasonable; and what can be more unreasonable or unfit for God to grant, or more profane and presuming in any to ask, than that he would pardon an unrepenting sinner. To ask this of God is the same as to desire him to abrogate all his holy laws, and to grant

us a license to transgress them. As little can a wicked man sincerely pray, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for as every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, this is what the wicked man chuses, he gives himself up to his own heart's lusts, and delights to follow his wicked imaginations, so that to pray against temptation, is to pray against himself, and therefore he cannot be hearty in this petition, unless we suppose what is impossible; that a man should at the same time love and hate, chuse and refuse the same things. Lastly, when such an one says, for thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory for ever, which is both an acknowledgement of the infinite and adorable perfections of God, and giving him the praise and glory due unto him, how can it be supposed his heart should go along with his words, when at
the

the same time it appears by the whole course and tenor of his wicked life, that he neither owns the sovereign dominion of God, dreads his power, nor seeks his glory.

Thus it is very evident that a wicked man continuing such, cannot say this prayer or any one petition in it, with good attention and fervent devotion; nor can he have such inward affections of mind towards God, as the words express, nor any hearty desire to obtain those things which he seems to request of God; for if he had, he would soon become a better man. Whereas every good man by using this prayer, must naturally be rendered better. Since when he calls on God as his Father, he is reminded of that filial love and duty which he owes him; when he prays that God's name may be hallowed, his own mind must then also

be filled with an awful reverence towards him; when he says thy kingdom come, he is at the same time admonished to seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; when he says thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven, he is then taught his own duty humbly to resign himself to God's pleasure, and with all readiness and chearfulness to obey his commands. When he prays for his daily bread, he exercises an act of trust in God's providence, and is cautioned not to use any means to procure the good things of this life, but what he hath reason to expect for God's blessing upon. When he begs of God forgiveness of his sins, this petition must be grounded on the testimony of his own conscience, that he is truly penitent, and doth actually exercise such mercy and charity towards those who have offended him, as God hath made the condition of his being pardoned. When he
desires

desires of God not to be led into temptation, if his request is sincere, he will carefully avoid those dangers, which he earnestly prays to be delivered from. Lastly, when he gives glory to God, by a solemn acknowledgement of the divine perfections, saying thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever, if he is really affected with what he expresses, every time he devoutly repeats these words, his love to God will be increased, his faith strengthened, and his obedience confirmed.

To conclude; such being the excellency of this Prayer, such the advantages of our sincerely repeating it, what remains, but that, as the blessed Jesus, in compassion to our infirmities, hath taught us how to pray, so should we most earnestly implore his holy Spirit to assist us in Prayer, that by always pronouncing these words with
attention

attention and fervent devotion, we may thereby obtain his gracious promise, that whatsoever we ask the Father in his name, he will give us, that the Father may be glorified in his son.

Now to God the Father, &c.

F I N I S.



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